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WAYS AND WORDS

OF

MEN OF LETTERS.

64644

BY THE

REV. JAMES PYCROFT, B.A.

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AUTHOR OF "TWENTY YEARS IN THE CHURCH," ETC.

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PREFACE.

To explain the plan and intention of this book —in these days of Biographies, Letters, and Memoirs—a reader who would make himself familiar with the minds and manners of illustrious men, has many of the same advantages as if he had lived and moved within their highly-favoured circle. Naturally fond of this kind of reading, the Author has been long accustomed to note and to classify those *Words* and *Ways* which appeared most interesting in literary characters, especially those of the present century. Once already has his Portfolio been gleaned, to enliven and illustrate his *Course of English Reading;* and since that work proved so far attractive, that, with four

editions in England and one in New York, it has had the high privilege of guiding and directing students by thousands in their choice of books and course of study, the Author is further encouraged to draw upon the same fund of Literary Anecdotes to add interest and authority to his opinions on various other subjects.

Should this volume be favourably received, it may probably prove to be the first of a series.

BATH, *Dec.* 1, 1860.

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WAYS AND WORDS,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE READER IS PREPARED FOR THINGS THAT FOLLOW.

"WELL!" said an aged lady to her son — a successful author — as she laid down his book, on which every neighbour came but to congratulate her: "Well! who would have thought it? Only yesterday it seems, Edward, that I taught you your letters! However, your talent is evidently a gift."

"Say rather, a succession of gifts — you acknowledge that you gave the letters, and therewith an early habit of application. Remember what Sir Joshua Reynolds said in his lecture at the Royal Academy:—

"'Excellence is never granted to man but as

the reward of labour. It argues, indeed, no small strength of mind to persevere in habits of industry, without the pleasure of perceiving those advances, which, like the hands of a clock, whilst they make hourly approaches to their points, yet proceed so slowly as to escape observation.'"

"But when I say your talent is a gift, Edward, I mean that the effect seems altogether out of proportion to the means."

"This is only because you cannot enumerate the means and trace every link in the chain which connects the nursery lessons of the child with the successful essay of the full-grown man."

After a few more observations, our friend was invited to retrace those links, and to entertain his fond parent with something like the Confessions of a Successful Author. He was requested to throw aside all that mystery which great men are too apt to throw over their operations, as if to foil the efforts of those who would gladly share their honours; or, perhaps, we should rather suppose, because they are conscious that the least trace of the studied outline left visible on the canvas might break the spell by which a Michael Angelo would entrance the mind of the beholder.

The confessions of the author soon proved difficult to make. He attempted to explain how the

success of his work depended partly on ideas, and partly on the language which clothed them.

As to ideas, he explained that his mind was as a storehouse for Observation or Reading to fill, and for Judgment and Discrimination, aided by Diligence, and Patience, and Attention, to classify and arrange, so as to be forthcoming without mistake or confusion from their respective pigeon-holes at the slightest hint of a wish or a thought; and, above all, for Invention or Imagination to combine—like the pieces of a kaleidoscope, or like figures, the factors of an endless series in the hands of the mathematician.

As to language, he observed, that "proper words in their proper places," as Swift said, constituted a good style, neither offending the ear by discordant sound, nor causing impatience by words too many, nor hurrying on the reader breathless—and this Macaulay, with all his excellence, is apt to do—by a want of repose, and words too few for a composed and healthy digestion.

All this he endeavoured to explain, insisting, at every point, that no one step was at all extraordinary as compared with the next preceding, and that the greatest writer would descend to the level of very ordinary sons of earth—his elevation being intelligible, at least, if not attainable by com-

mon mortals—if every step in his progress were duly measured and understood.

"And is this true of all great men?" was the question.

"Of all—yes, all," was our friend's reply. Witness the confessions of the men of genius—the evidence of their weakness as well as the secret of their strength—which may be gleaned from the history of their lives.

Being present at this conversation, we were led into a pleasing train of thought as to the benefit the world would derive from the Confessions of Great Men. For it has often been observed, that what seems magic is only "science in disguise." What often passes under the name of Genius is only a mind proceeding by degrees, easy to recognise when once pointed out; albeit we believe there are some master-spirits that attain their transcendent ends by a bound too rapid to follow, and by means too subtle for any ordinary intelligence to analyse.

Soon after, we considered that Biography, though a very instructive, forms a very voluminous part of English literature. Happy is the man who can glean from a quarto volume as many useful facts as would fill twenty pages. To keep up with

the steady but stealthy march of time, the world is occasionally favoured with some useful digest: but since the days of D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, the accumulated Letters, Memoirs, and Biographies of fifty years have remained comparatively lost to all but the few fortunate men who have abundant leisure to hold converse with one after another of those men of genius—those mighty spirits who have left "footprints on the sands of time," and who seem to hover about the world, moulding minds and calming passions, and prompting pure and holy thoughts—whose privilege it seems, then, only really to live when the poor frames which their energies, like caged eagles, at length have shattered, lie silent in the grave.

We presume, therefore, that our work may be acceptable, if we propose from time to time some question to be solved, and summon, as from the tomb, such worthy witnesses as the world conspires to honour, and whose every word is treasured as so much fact and so much truth, and as the richest contribution to the experience and the wisdom of this mortal life.

CHAPTER II.

ATTIC BEES IN GLASS HIVES, OR GREAT MEN AT THEIR STUDIES; SHOWING THE PAINS AND PRACTICE BY WHICH EMINENCE IN COMPOSITION HAS BEEN ATTAINED.

A GENERAL opinion prevails that those easy, flowing, and graceful compositions, which are admired from age to age, were thrown off with little thought and little effort, as the spontaneous fruits of a happy genius. Certainly, there is a sense in which we may say, that a laboured composition cannot be a pleasing one—that ideas which do not pass naturally from the mind of the writer can rarely win an easy admission into the mind of the reader. But, notwithstanding, the history of every great writer bears witness that no genius is so fertile as to dispense with cultivation—that while nature does much, pains and practice will do more, and that the words "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," truly represent the patient exercise and the delicate study of

their mother-tongue, which have characterised every successful Author.

,, Neither is it any exception to this rule to admit, that some much-admired productions have flowed from the pen almost as fast as that pen could write. This facility of execution is by no means a proof of the absence of severe labour and preparation; because, facility the most surprising to witness is often only a result of much habitual and antecedent labour. It is commonly the meditation of many years that is mistaken for the happy effusion of a month. In such cases, thoughts long familiar to the mind will insensibly clothe themselves in appropriate words; and then they come forth, as much to the wonder of the uninitiated as even the tunes which were thawed from Baron Munchausen's trumpet. Ideas long floating in the mind, and existing in a state of solution, will, under the stimulus of occasion, issue forth in one continued flow, and readily crystallise into fair proportion.

When we read the lives of the most eminent painters, every page informs us that no part of their time was spent in dissipation. Even an increase of fame served only to augment their industry. To be convinced with what persevering assiduity they pursued their studies, we need only

reflect on their method of proceeding in their most celebrated works. When they conceived a subject, they first made a variety of sketches; then a finished drawing of the whole; after that a more correct drawing of every separate part—heads, hands, feet, and pieces of drapery: they then painted the picture, and after all retouched it from the life. "The pictures thus wrought with such pains," said Sir Joshua Reynolds, "now appear like the effect of enchantment, and as if some mighty genius had struck them off at a blow."

But some one will inquire, What are we to do when the subject is not a familiar one; when ideas have to be pressed into an unwilling service? Surely, to give those ideas a natural connexion in a lucid series of easy sentences, and to throw out the matter into bold relief by graphic touches or speaking illustrations, this is by no means a light and easy description of literary employment.—Why then, our only hope of writing well depends on continued musing, meditating, and digesting, till the subject has become no longer a stranger, but on the footing of a familiar and daily acquaintance of the mind: by that time, it will also be associated with a fair number of expressive household words.

To become familiar with a new subject, it is

usual to read and reflect on all that throws light upon it. When thus the mind is charged with all the common facts, topics, or arguments, some writers walk about the room and think; some talk to themselves almost audibly, putting their best of things into their best of words. Some dictate to an amanuensis: but this is rare; for, most persons find themselves, like Oliver Goldsmith, utterly lost when they try to dictate, and say that pen and thoughts must go together; and not a few write down a list of topics, with some slight sketch of their argument; and, not uncommonly, many a sentence is written and erased, wholly or partially, and words substituted, and again replaced by others, for euphony of sound or propriety of expression. Only, we must observe, that all of these methods bear on one and the same point, from which every effective writer, whatever his practice or preliminaries, needs must start; namely, from a comprehensive view and a thorough acquaintance with his subject. This was Horace's meaning when he said, "Choose a subject within your strength, and, with full command of that subject, you will never be at a loss either for choice words or clear arrangement."

This excellence in composition Horace further explains, by an apt illustration, when he proceeds to say, "The great beauty of writing consists in

this; that you should have so perfect a command over all your materials as to be able to introduce each topic precisely at its proper moment—that your ideas should never be at the mercy of your words, but your words be ever waiting on your ideas; and so much so, that you should be able to afford to put aside one thought after another, as having an abundant choice of them, with little doubt of their recurring when more immediately applicable to your subject."

In this opinion, all good writers agree with Horace. For, all good writers choose a topic on which their thoughts have long been running; or, when the subject is forced on them by circumstances, they read and ruminate upon it till they have ideas enough and to spare, well knowing that this fulness of mind and superfluity of ideas, struggling as under high-pressure to find vent, is the secret of all compact and nervous diction.

The foregoing observations we now propose to illustrate by the admitted practice of writers of the highest eminence.

The style of Hume's History was admired by Gibbon for what he called its "careless, inimitable beauties." But, Lord Brougham tells us that this apparently careless style was in reality the result of a great deal of pains and patient correction.

The manuscript of the reigns last written bear marks of most careful composition; but, it must be observed that the reigns last written were not the later but the earlier reigns; for, the volumes first written and first published were those which contained the history of the Stuarts: neither is it only in the History, but also in the letters of Hume, that the copy shows erasures, corrections, and words replaced by others, and replaced more than once, in some instances. Indeed, Hume, in a letter now extant, acknowledges that, in the choice of words, he followed the maxim of Quinctilian —"*Quæramus optimum, nec protenus offerentibus gaudeamus*—We should look for the best word, and not be too fond of using the first that offers."

This remark of Quinctilian reminds us of a very high compliment, as related to us by a contemporary, paid by Charles James Fox to William Pitt:—"For my own part," said Fox, "I cannot say I am ever much at a loss for a word; but the honourable member has not only *a* word, but *the* word, *the very word*, to express his meaning."

But here we must interpose one very necessary caution; namely, that the time to seek for the best word is not when we are writing, but rather when we are reviewing and correcting our pages.

While in the act of writing or of speaking, it is necessary to think chiefly of what we are going to say, and to let the words come of themselves: otherwise, if we stop at every line to pick and choose our expressions, our style will lose in fluency far more than it will gain in phrases.

If a thorough command of materials, and a full knowledge of what we are going to say, be essential to a good style, no man ever gave such proofs of this qualification as Sir Walter Scott.

For, "Sir Walter Scott," said his Amanuensis, "could dictate with ease, although I wrote with as much rapidity as I was able. I have performed the same service of writing to dictation for other persons who would walk up and down excogitating —would stop mending a phrase, or recasting a sentence. None of these aids were necessary to Sir Walter; his thoughts flowed easily and felicitously, without any difficulty in finding appropriate language. However, it soon became apparent to me, that he was carrying on two distinct trains of thought—one of which was already arranged and in the act of being spoken, while, at the same time, his mind was in advance considering what was afterwards to be said. This double train of thought revealed itself occasionally in the mention of a word which had no reference to the

sentence then dictating, but a word which was immediately recognised in the sentence following."

"Still, with all deference to Sir Walter, we doubt whether he, or any other Author, would have found this leisurely dictation quite compatible with a more serious subject. The writers of Fiction are usually characterised by minds most full and fertile, in their own peculiar province. Neither is extreme conciseness and accuracy of writing desirable in familiar stories of every-day life. It is the part of the Novelist, alternately to excite and to gratify curiosity. The inquisitive and sanguine reader must be kept continually in suspense. He must have time to wonder, to conjecture, and to guess. The Novelist, therefore, must not unfold his legendary roll too fast; but must give us time to read, to mark, and to digest. It is a great error to draw the varied Panorama too fast across the stage; seeing that too rapid a succession of objects, however beautiful in themselves, serves rather to confuse than to multiply impressions. The necessary pauses and intervals of a narrative are agreeably afforded by a style rather diffuse than concise—so that, if the thread is lost at one point, the reader may be able to take it up at another.

Indeed, a Novelist has more of the character of a Speaker than of a Writer; so, he may naturally

sketch with a free pencil and a flowing brush—indulging in a more copious and conversational style. Feltham said, that a fair proportion of words to things, was more desirable than that brevity which so many feel bound in honour to affect; on the principle, he observed—and this is one of the wittiest illustrations we have ever heard—"that, without a certain modicum of chaff, the horse is apt to bolt his oats."

On this point a good observation has been made by the Biographer of Mr. Roscoe, as to the style in which he composed his histories. "It may be remarked, that its greatest beauty consists in what may be considered the chief excellence of language—its extreme perspicuity. He on no occasion affects that oracular brevity—the vice of some distinguished writers—which while it, perhaps, impresses the writer with an idea of depth and vigour, often leaves him at a loss what meaning he ought to attach to the obscure eloquence that excites his admiration. In the *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, and of *Leo X.*, everything is presented clear and well defined to the apprehension. There are no attempts at sublimity, by opening up shadowy glimpses of conceptions difficult to be delineated by language. The historian understands himself, and is comprehended by the reader. His

diction flows along with a smooth, full current, like a broad river, reflecting with equal truth all objects, great and small. It has a richness, an elevation, a poetical floridness, highly pleasing to the imagination.

As to Brevity, the secret of its beauty is, that when perfectly natural it is the result of a mind full of its subject—a symptom, which every reader welcomes, that the writer had ideas ready for his words, instead of having his words and ideas to seek at the same time. Brevity is valuable rather as an omen of excellence than as an excellence in itself. Bad writers are diffuse and prosy, for the same reason that bad speakers stammer and hesitate; because they are making a cast for ideas and really have nothing to say. Brevity when made a point of, —that is, studied and affected brevity, is far indeed from being a beauty in writing.

Horace ridicules this error in "*Brevis esse laboro* —I make a great effort to be brief, and the consequence is that I am unintelligible."

William Wilberforce was of the same opinion. In his *Practical Christianity* he purposely avoided that pruning and condensation which literary taste usually prescribes. He wisely judged, that a style rather diffuse is more easily read. The readers, like the hearers of religious discourses, are well

pleased to have their attention roused by a little repetition. Brief and terse maxims are of their own nature unconnected with the context. They go by you in a single flash, whereas you have time to think and recover yourself in a longer sentence; and Wilberforce once observed to a friend—"Do not curtail too much: portable soup must be diluted before it can be used."

"A tedious writer," said Bishop Hurd, "is not one who uses many words, but one who uses many words to little purpose. Where the sense keeps pace with the words, though these be numerous, or drawn out into long periods, I am not tired with an author; but when his expression goes on and the sense stands still, I am out of patience with him."

The poet Rogers used to tell a story of the brevity of Talleyrand's correspondence; for, once a lady wrote to him in highflown terms of grief, informing him of the death of her husband, and expecting a letter of condolence in return: but the only answer was:—

"Hélas, Madame!

"Votre affectionné, &c.

"TALLEYRAND."

In less than a year, the same lady wrote that she had married again, to which his laconic reply was:—

"Oh, oh, Madame!

"Votre affectionné, &c.

"TALLEYRAND."

But as to brevity, conciseness, and that exact proportion of words to things which distinguish our finest writings—and no book more than Sir W. Blackstone's *Commentaries*—this is by no means to be accomplished without careful study. Horace tells us that we should observe a delicate discrimination in the choice of our words, and great nicety in their arrangement. *Serere verba* is not the same thing as *spargere verba*: that is, we must dibble our words in the nicest order, and not sow them broad-cast, if we would attain to excellence. The perfection of composition is well exemplified in Sir James Mackintosh's *Laws of Nature and of Nations*. For, in those truly classical compositions, every sentence reads with the utmost ease and perspicuity; yet, if you analyse the structure, you will find the words are like mosaic work: the sentences are rather tessellated than constructed; each word fitting admirably into its own place, but defying all

transposition. Campbell said, that so accurate was the composition of Sir James Mackintosh, that if his writings were destroyed, and only some few detached sentences preserved, the hand of a master would be recognised, "as evidently as we trace ideal grandeur in the mutilated remains of the sculptured Theseus."

Another instance of the most accurate composition is found in all the first part of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. No lines of Shakespeare are more highly finished.

Such excellence no mortal man can attain without patient study. The Reviewer of Lord Brougham's *Lives of Men of Letters* writes—"We have not the least suspicion that compact perspicuity can ever be sustained without much care and reflection. Of the two most graceful prose writers on a large scale in our own time, the manuscripts show few erasures; but an unblotted page is no evidence of ease in composition. The one of these writers had so extraordinary a memory that he could finish a chapter during a ride, and then set it down so as hardly to need revision: the other not only kept Common-place Books, in which every thought that occurred to him as likely to be useful afterwards was entered and indexed; but he also wrote out every paragraph on a separate scrap, and

worked it up in pencil, before he trusted his pen with a syllable for the press."

Ariosto furnishes another instance of careful selection and patient labour. His manuscript shows that many a lofty and figurative expression was written and erased before he attained to that chaste simplicity, to the imitation of which Galileo ascribed his own success in making science attractive to the general reader.

The mention of Lord Brougham reminds us that no man has gone beyond Lord Brougham in the patient finish of particular passages of his speeches; he has himself recorded that the peroration on Queen Caroline's case was written many times over before he thought it worthy of the occasion.

On the subject of careful composition, we trust that a few words on the Rev. Charles Simeon and his sermon-writing will not fail to be interesting. For, Simeon was among the number of Great Men. We may call all men Great, and those only deserve the name of Great who have succeeded in stamping their character on the generations among which they lived, and who light up a flame to illumine the minds and to fire the energies of generations after them. And, in this sense, most truly Great was Charles Simeon. When first he commenced his

work of reformation, he found at Cambridge nothing but the "dry bones" of the Prophets and Evangelists, and—as a fellow-worker with the Most High—he "made those dry bones live." What is called Evangelical Religion has, as Mr. Foster has explained, very few attractions for men of taste. Still, it is not at pure truth and heart-felt earnestness that the taste of any man rebels; but, happy would it be, if all the so-called Evangelicals were as far from the character of Maw-worm—for this is the secret of aversion—as was Charles Simeon. The preaching of Simeon was plain sense and truth. Far from warping texts to the unbending rule of any arbitrary and capricious theory, he delighted to enforce all duties in fair proportion. Neither sacrificing Faith to Works nor Works to Faith, he tells us that he always endeavoured to preserve the balance and the proportion of faith, and thus to declare to his congregation the whole Counsel of God.

That which was called vital and Evangelical religion in the early days of Simeon, is adopted as plain and orthodox in the greater earnestness of the present day. And now, some who assume the same eclectic name of Evangelical have quite overstepped the bounds of Simeon. With such persons, therefore, let us not be supposed to identify our-

selves, because we give the following as an account of the sermon-writing of one we delight to call the great and good Charles Simeon:—

"Few sermons," says Mr. Carus, "cost Mr. Simeon less than twelve hours of study—many twice that time, and some several days." He once told Mr. Carus that he had recomposed the plan of one discourse nearly thirty times. He gave the utmost attention to his rules for the composition of discourses. When he had fixed on his text, he endeavoured first to ascertain the simple obvious meaning of the words, which he frequently reduced to one plain and simple proposition. He then aimed at catching the spirit of the passage, whether consolatory, alarming, cautionary, or instructive. After this, his object was to give the full scope to the particular truth before him, making it, of course, really harmonious with the analogy of faith, but not over-studious to display a systematic agreement.

In one word, Simeon by no means affords a precedent to those who are made careless by "a fatal facility" of composition. As Simeon was eminently successful and effective in the pulpit, so it is most important that it should be known that he was also most patient and most laborious in his study.

As to sermon-writing, it should be done on the

principle of scene-painting, with a few bold strokes, because minute touches spoil the effect. We should remember that we are preparing not a picture for leisurely inspection, but a moving panorama, and this consideration will obviously suggest a few and striking features; for, before any one can look into the minutiæ, the representation is gone. Many eminent speakers have been said to refine too much. This is a fault to which ingenious and accurate minds are very liable: still a fault, indeed, it is. For, it wearies the audience, and divides and diminishes the effect of the speech.

Poets, like preachers, have also submitted to slow and patient labour when writing lines to live in the memory of their fellow-men.

For, the following is a picture of Goldsmith writing his *Deserted Village*, as drawn by Cooke, his countryman, and also his neighbour while he was living in the Temple:—

Goldsmith would first sketch part of the plan of the poem in prose, and set down such ideas as occurred to him. Then, he would most carefully correct them, and substitute others which seemed more suitable—occasionally some impromptu verses would be intermingled with this prose. Ten lines, those from the fifth to the fifteenth, constituted his second morning's work; and these, as

Cooke entered his room, Goldsmith read off to him:—

"Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighb'ring hill,
The hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!"

"This," he exclaimed, "is no bad morning's work"—and then he proposed a "*shoemaker's holiday.*" The said shoemaker's holiday meant a ramble about the fields with a friend, a nice dinner with suitable appetite at some rural inn, and then a little better fare than usual to enjoy the evening in his humble apartments at home.

Such was the labour bestowed on a poem, perhaps the most popular of any in the English language.

Certain modern poets seem to think that the true poetic inspiration is of the nature of a fit of *ex-tempore* insanity. This rapidity of execution was strikingly exemplified by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Mr. Slatter, of Oxford, once related to us, that, while publishing some poems for Shelley, he walked

down one morning about eight o'clock to University College, and found the poet, who had not been to bed, asleep on his sofa. As Shelley rubbed his eyes and asked what he wanted, Mr. Slatter informed him that the printers had applied for more copy. "Then, just sit down," said Shelley; "I will not detain you long;" and in a few minutes he began to write. In about as short a time as he would write a familiar letter, he dashed off some seventy lines, which he handed over as an instalment, and said he would shortly send some more.

The very excellent Robert Southey had much sympathy for Shelley, in spite of that poet's faults. Southey thought Shelley's irreligion was transient, and that it was with him a state of mental struggle or development, which, like a process of fermentation, might ultimately give way to a more pure and wholesome habit. And if Shelley had only the good fortune to have associated generally with Southey, instead of Byron, his poetical, as well as his religious character, might have been very different. For Southey would have taught him the lessons he impressed on the students at Glasgow, that one main element of a poet's success was held in the ancient epithet of "the *learned* poets." He might also have added that the Muses were the daughters of Mnemosyne, or memory, indicating in

the language of Mythology, that a well-stored mind is indispensable for poetical composition. Invention means little more than new combinations; and, unless the mental kaleidoscope be furnished with many brilliant pieces, no power of genius can ever produce a variety of magic pictures.

CHAPTER III.

HOW AUTHORS LAY IN THEIR STORES—HUNTER, BACON, ROSCOE, JOHNSON—HOW MILTON AND POPE CONDESCENDED TO LEARN ENGLISH.

Before Dr. Johnson commenced his *Rambler*, he had collected in a Common-place Book a variety of hints for Essays on different subjects. "The same method of accumulating intelligence," says Sir John Hawkins, "had been practised by Addison." For, the papers of the *Spectator*, like other essays which have survived the changes of time and the caprice of fashion, were simply the form in which their author chose to impart to the world thoughts which, for the most part, had long been shaping and clothing themselves with words in his own mind.

The famous John Hunter used to say, that it was only by putting his thoughts into writing that a man could tell the state of his own mind. He said it was "like a tradesman's taking stock,

without which he never knows either what he has or what he wants."

Lord Bacon left behind him notes of the same kind, entitled, *Sudden Thoughts set down for Use.*

Mr. Smiles, in his excellent work entitled *Self-Help*, reminds us that Sir Isaac Newton wrote his *Chronology* fifteen times over before he was satisfied with it, and Gibbon wrote out his memoir nine times. Sir M. Hale studied many years at the rate of sixteen hours a-day; and when wearied with the study of the law, he would recreate himself with philosophy and the study of the mathematics. Hume wrote thirteen hours a-day while preparing his *History of England.* Montesquieu, speaking of one part of his writings, said to a friend, "You will read it in a few hours; but I assure you it cost me so much labour that it has whitened my hair."

It is related of Roscoe that, at a very early period, the idea had occurred to him of writing the History of Lorenzo de' Medici. For many years other subjects, better adapted to exercise the capacity of a youthful writer, had engaged his attention, and prevented him from prematurely engaging in this undertaking. But he was always preparing for it. While perusing the historians of Italy, more particularly Machiavelli and Ammirato,

he carefully noted whatever threw any light on the life or character of Lorenzo; and his researches, though at first confined by the narrowness of his library, gradually extended, embracing both contemporary authorities, and all those writers who have since contributed to enrich the historical literature of Italy. Through the exertions of friends, manuscript documents were obtained from Florence; his own library, too, rapidly increased; and his labours, thus aided, and rendered easier, proceeded with pleasure to himself towards their completion.

The general opinion entertained by Dr. Johnson's friends was, that he wrote as correctly and elegantly in haste, and under various obstructions of person and situation, as other men can who have health and ease, and leisure for correction.

Boswell says, with great truth, that "posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed." And Sir John Hawkins informs us, that these Essays hardly ever underwent a revision before they were sent to the press;

and adds, "the original manuscripts of the *Rambler* have passed through my hands, and by the perusal of them I am warranted to say, as was said of Shakespeare by the players of his time, that he *never blotted a line;* and, I believe, without the risk of that retort which Ben Jonson made to them,—"Would he had blotted out a thousand!"

"Such," says Mr. Chalmers, "are the opinions of those friends of Dr. Johnson, who had long lived in his society, had studied his writings, and were eager to give to the public every information by which its curiosity to know the history of so eminent a character might be gratified. But by what fatality it has happened that they were ignorant of the vast labour Dr. Johnson employed in correcting this work, after it came from the first press, it is not easy to determine."

Dr. Johnson almost re-wrote the *Rambler* after the first folio edition! and he employed the *limæ labor* not only on the second, but on the third edition, to an extent, I presume, never known in the annals of literature, and may be said to have carried Horace's rule far beyond either its letter or spirit, which has been thus translated:—

> "Never the verse approve, and hold as good
> Till many a day and many a blot has wrought
> The polish'd work, and chasten'd every thought,
> By tenfold labour to perfection brought."

The alterations made by Dr. Johnson in the second and third editions of the *Rambler* far exceed six thousand; a number which may, perhaps, justify the use of the word re-wrote, although it must not be taken in its literal acceptation. If it be asked, Of what nature are these alterations? or, Why that was altered which the world thought perfect? the author may be allowed to answer for himself. Notwithstanding its fame while printing in single numbers, the encomiums of the learned, and the applause of friends, he knew its imperfections, and determined to remove them. He foresaw that upon this foundation his future fame would rest, and he determined that the superstructure thrown up in haste should be strengthened and perfected at leisure. A few passages from No. 169 will explain his sentiments on this subject:—

"Men have sometimes appeared of such transcendent abilities, that their slightest and most cursory performances excel all that labour and study can enable meaner intellects to compose; as there are regions of which the spontaneous products cannot be equalled in other soils by care and culture. But it is no less dangerous for any man to place himself in this rank of understanding, and fancy that he is born to be illustrious without labour, than to omit the cares of husbandry, and

expect from his ground the blossoms of Arabia." "Among the writers of antiquity, I remember none, except Statius, who ventures to mention the speedy production of his writings, either as an extenuation of his faults or as a proof of his facility. Nor did Statius, when he considered himself a candidate for lasting reputation, think a closer attention unnecessary; but, amidst all his pride and indigence, the two great hasteners of modern poems, he employed twelve years upon the *Thebaid*, and thinks his claim to renown proportionate to his labour."—"To him, whose eagerness of praise hurries his productions soon into the light, many imperfections are unavoidable, even where the mind furnishes the materials, as well as regulates their disposition, and where nothing depends upon search or information. But, delay opens new veins of thought; the subject, dismissed for a time, appears with a new train of dependent images; the accidents of reading or conversation supply new ornaments or allusions, or mere intermission of the fatigue of thinking enables the mind to collect new force and make new excursions."

With such sentiments, it must appear at least probable that our Author would, in his own case, endeavour to repair the mischief of haste or negligence; but as these were not very obvious to his

friends, they made no inquiry after them, nor entertained any suspicion of the labour he endured to render his writings more worthy of their praise. On one occasion Boswell came so near the question, that if Dr. Johnson had thought it worth entering upon he had a very fair opportunity. Being asked by a lady, whether he thought he could make his *Rambler* better, he answered that he certainly could.

Boswell. "I'll lay you a bet, sir, you cannot."

Johnson. "But I will, sir, if I choose. I shall make the best of them you shall pick out, better."

Boswell. "But you may add to them; I will not allow of that."

Johnson. "Nay, sir, there are three ways of making them better — putting out, adding, or correcting."

As regards works of sterling merit, an author at the present day is at a greater disadvantage, because he must write for the many, and not for the few. As to the few — men of sound sense and pure taste — their wants are nearly all supplied. New truths or new principles no one can attempt to supply, and they readily detect the old story, however ingeniously disguised. This is true, to a great extent, of Prose; but as to Poetry, all the figures and resources of the poet, and all the similes

and metaphors are so familiar, that men regard new poetry like new sermons — as a very unnecessary reproduction of things long familiar to the mind. But those who cater for the many must remember, as Aristotle said, that they must calculate on an audience composed of a "very ordinary or unsophisticated set of people." The consequence is, said Thomas Moore, that since those

"Who live to please, must please to live,"

authors will learn to write down to the lowest standard. For literature, like legislation, is soon found to suffer by that kind of universal suffrage which results from extending the circle of your judges till you actually let the mob in to vote.

Authors had need to be men of patient industry, for they labour under serious disadvantages; for authors, like public speakers, have often complained that, without practice, they can never be perfect; and, till they are perfect, they have few opportunities of practice.

"Mediocribus esse poetis
Non Dî, non homines, non concessere columnæ."

That is, no reader will buy, and no publisher will offer, anything that is only "very good considering." Of Oratory, it has been remarked that there never was any good speaker who did not acquire

his proficiency at the expense of his hearers. There was Charles James Fox, a man who, as said Wilberforce, could commence at full speed, and roll on for hours without fatiguing himself or his hearers —even his talents were gradually developed by practice; for, he made a point of speaking as often as he could—once every night if an opportunity offered—expressly with a view to his own improvement.

But, as to Authorship, readers are not quite as indulgent as hearers, and by no means as easy to satisfy. The author soon learns that mere mediocrity will not pass current; and is therefore tempted to sacrifice the excellence to which he might attain by practice to an ambitious and unnatural effort to appear perfect in a day. The author is still further cramped and discouraged by critics to conciliate, by arbitrary rules and models from which it is dangerous to depart, and by some conventional standard to which his taste must conform. What wonder that the free spirit of genius should be impatient of such leading-strings, and that society should often lose the benefit of the noblest creative powers by exacting a style unsuited to their bent! just as the noblest of Grecian architects might have been lost to the world in an age when nothing but Gothic could be understood.

Milton is also a witness to the truth that the highest poetic genius must stoop to patient toil.

The first rude sketch of *Paradise Lost* is preserved in the form of one of the ancient religious dramas, called Mysteries, and bearing the name of *Adam the Un-paradised.* Voltaire tells a wild story of a farce from which, he says, Milton derived some hints while in Italy, called the *Adam of Andraini,* and opening, as Dr. Johnson delighted to quote, with something no less curious than the line, "*Let the rainbow be the fiddlestick of the fiddle of Heaven.*"

That the *Paradise Lost* was written after the most mature preparation, that it was the disburthening of a mighty spirit, and the outpouring of a mind "rich with the spoils of time," and laden with the treasures of widely-varied and comprehensive research, there can, indeed, be no kind of doubt. At the commencement of the third book, Milton has left on record that, at that stage of his wondrous work, if not before, his sight was gone. And since it is through the eye that all the beauties of the present, and very much of the wisdom of the past, gain admission to the mind, Milton presents to us the interesting picture of genius engaged in the greatest of all intellectual works, and solely depending on a store which it

was, from that moment forbidden to replenish or increase.

Milton composed with much rapidity. The silence of the night and the freshness of the early dawn were the hours most congenial to his powers. At these times "he would pour out with great fluency his unpremeditated verse." "Versification," —it is Dr. Johnson we are quoting—"free, like Milton's, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command. No small part of the *Paradise Lost* was composed while the poet was playing on his organ, or swinging in his chair, which at times was the only kind of exercise he could enjoy. For Milton suffered severely from the gout: so much so, that he used to say that, were it not for his gout, his blindness would be tolerable.

Having thus been indulged with a glimpse, not only at Goldsmith but at Milton, in the hour of their inspiration, let us now turn to look into the study of Alexander Pope.

Pope obtained, by practice, such facility of versification, that his thoughts eventually began to clothe themselves more naturally in poetry than in prose. But this proficiency was the merited

reward of pains and practice, and not the free privilege of unaided talent. Pope's *Iliad* was published by subscription, as also were Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dryden's *Virgil*, and several other works of the same early date. Pope engaged, with a list of five hundred and seventy-five subscribers, for six hundred and fifty-four copies (the first impression was only six hundred and sixty), to supply a poetical translation of the *Iliad*, in six quartos, at the price of six guineas each set. Having committed himself to this bold undertaking, "he was, for a time, timorous and uneasy, had his nights disturbed by dreams of long journeys through unknown ways, and wished, as he said, 'that somebody would hang him.'"

Pope's facility increased with practice; and he represents himself as despatching regularly fifty lines a-day, and making sanguine computations of the duration of his labours. At the rate of fifty lines a-day, the *Iliad*, numbering nearly sixteen thousand lines, would have been translated in three hundred and twenty days: this would be about one year's work, if we deduct the Sundays. But the actual time of the performance was nearly six times that period. For Pope began the *Iliad* in the twenty-fifth year, and ended it in the thirtieth year of his age.

The following passage from Johnson offers so feeling and so sensible an apology for this wide difference between the plan and the performance of Pope's *Iliad* that we venture to introduce it, more especially as it furnishes an excellent specimen of that language which Lord Macaulay aptly called *Johnsonese;* though, at the same time, it exemplifies an opinion we very strongly entertain, that it was the fulness and the accuracy of Johnson's mind, as well as his measured and dictatorial manner, which betrayed him into such cumbersome sentences. When the subject was weighty and worthy of his diction, so much may be said, certainly, in its favour; but we cannot deny that sometimes he reminds us of a giant cracking nuts. So Goldsmith told Johnson, very wittily, that if he were to write a book about little fishes, he would make them all talk like whales.

The passage in Johnson to which we allude is the following:—"According to this calculation, the progress of Pope may seem to have been slow; but the distance is commonly very great between actual performances and speculative possibility. It is natural to suppose that as much as has been done to-day may be done to-morrow; but on the morrow some difficulty emerges, or some external impediment obstructs. Indolence, interruption,

business, and pleasure, all take their turns of retardation; and every long work is lengthened by a thousand causes that can, and by ten thousand that cannot, be recounted. Perhaps no extensive and multifarious performance was ever effected within the term originally fixed in the undertaker's mind. He that runs against time has an antagonist not subject to casualties."

Some readers may observe, How different is this writing from the ease and the elegance of Addison! True; but only try to express the same number of ideas with equal precision in Addison's style, and see what will be the result. Johnson could as easily have clothed his unwieldy limbs in the garments, as have clothed his thoughts in the language, of Addison. If, however, we are asked whether Addison would not have been contented to say less, and to give the same general idea with less detail and limitation, we say, Certainly he would; and we should have admired his good sense for so doing. But still we must maintain, that one great cause that Johnson's sentences are so heavy is that they contain so much; and, to use rather a homely illustration, we can hardly expect that Johnson's cake should be as light and digestible as Addison's, because it had so many more plums. At the same time, we fully admit

that, with the same materials, Addison had much the lighter hand.

But let us return to our subject, the composition of Pope.

In Johnson's *Life of Pope* we have some interesting copies of portions of Pope's manuscript, with his own genuine emendations and interlineal corrections, showing by how much even a poet's second thoughts are best. "Of these specimens," says Johnson, "every man who has cultivated poetry, or who delights to trace the mind from the rudeness of its first conceptions to the elegance of the last, will naturally desire a greater number, but most other readers will be tired." We so far concur with the learned Doctor in this opinion that we decline to transcribe the blotted page, but would refer the more curious reader to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* for some interesting specimens.

The smooth and harmonious numbers of Pope, so far superior in cadence and rhythm to any poetry of an earlier date, are said by Dr. Johnson actually "to have tuned the English language; for, since the days of Pope, no writer, however deficient in other powers, has wanted melody." It is also remarked by Dr. Watts, that there is scarcely a happy combination of words, and scarcely a phrase poetically elegant in the English language, which

Pope has not inserted in his version of Homer. And Johnson remarks, "How Pope obtained possession of so many beauties of speech, it were desirable to know."

This question, How Pope, born and bred in England, learned that poetical phraseology which seems only part of his mother-tongue?—this is, indeed, a question which it would hardly occur to any but an author to propose; so much a matter of course does it appear to ordinary readers that a poet should be able to summon all the stores of the language to do his bidding. But this opinion, however natural, agrees not with the experience of men of genius.

That choice language which we find in the poems of Pope and in the prose of Addison, is hardly the language of our mother-tongue; or, at all events, it must be admitted that such smooth, and chaste, and varied diction is a form and dialect of that mother-tongue, far superior to what we learn by nature, and only to be acquired by art.

Let us explain ourselves a little more at length. We once heard a sensible country Rector inform a new Curate that the lower classes could not understand above one-fourth part of that English which the higher classes speak; and, consequently, that as often as a preacher deviates from this very

limited vocabulary he is virtually speaking in an unknown tongue.

Now, if one word out of every four in the dictionary is as large a proportion of the language as the ploughman can understand, one word out of four is about as many as the Squire or the Parson are able commonly to use. Words, the instruments of thought, are like other instruments, or other tools. A first-rate workman carries a great variety of tools in his flag-basket; and attains an additional finish and accuracy by the skilful application of each. But the rougher and ruder kind of labourer can handle only one or two of a sort. So is it with the ordinary vocabulary of common conversation. One word acts many parts. Nearly all persons, without special study, may be detected in ringing the changes on one set of words, and of moving round and round in one narrow circle of trite phraseology. It is one thing to understand every word in the language; but another thing to have every word ready and available for its proper use and application. Even Goldsmith, so choice and so chaste in his writings, was singularly careless and inaccurate in common conversation. It was remarked of him by one of his friends—"Goldsmith, for instance, would say, 'This is as good a guinea as was ever *born*:'

coined, he ought to say; but such a word as *coined* would never occur to Goldsmith."

"It is obvious that persons who read only on one subject are likely to find their style limited to a confined circle of phraseology. They will add a few nautical or maritime expressions after a trip to the seaside; they will say their ideas feel *under* high *pressure*, after the steamship; they will designate one friend as a *specimen of Early English*, another as *Decorated*, another as *Gothic*, after a smattering of Church architecture: and, perhaps, after a month at geology, they will speak of peculiarities of character as *cropping out*, and call old-fashioned people *antediluvian*. They will thus astonish their brothers and sisters with a new vocabulary of terms almost as striking as a new language. The truth is, they have been pressing into their service one or more classes of words never used before. The advice which these observations naturally involve is this: "Vary your reading if you would enrich your style."

Let it be granted, therefore, that one column of the dictionary out of four is as large a proportion of our language as any one person will use by nature. It is by art—by variety of reading, and minute observation of every word in every sentence of the most effective writers—that all

the great masters of composition have studied to enrich their style; their endeavour being to incorporate and make habitual as much of the other three columns as they can.

In this study of language, Pope had succeeded so far as to lay the whole language under contribution, to supply words in unison with every tone of feeling, and words expressive of every shade of thought. So, Johnson, struck with admiration at these varied beauties, immediately raised the question, How such command of language ever was attained?

To indulge our curiosity, we are permitted to know that, first of all, Pope prepared himself by endeavouring to start from the point at which Dryden, his predecessor in the art of translation, had left off. By perusing the works of Dryden, Pope first of all discovered the most perfect fabric of English verse, and habituated himself to that only which he pronounced the best. In the next place, as Johnson believed, Pope gleaned from authors, obscure as well as eminent, what he thought brilliant or useful, and preserved it all in a regular collection. For it is remarked, that when, in Pope's last years, Hall's *Satires* were shown him, he expressed a wish that he had seen them sooner —a wish which would seem to imply a life-long

habit of enriching his poetic style by incorporating with it any beautiful expressions that might occur. Poets adopt the same mode of improvement as painters. A painter will study nature not only in the original of rivers, rocks, and flood and field, but also in the pictures drawn from nature by artists of acknowledged genius. For, the study of fine paintings opens our eyes to the beauties of nature before unseen. So also the poet will learn the beauties of language from observing the combinations of words and phrases by which poetic beauties have already been achieved.

This study of language would appear to some persons a mere mechanical exercise, below the dignity of true genius; yet another remark by Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Addison*, shows it was a kind of exercise to which even the greatest condescend. We allude to a sentence in the *Life of Addison*: — "Addison's sentences have neither studied amplitude nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style —familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious—must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

So said Johnson: yet how few readers imagine that authors ever make a serious study of their own mother-tongue!

Having already touched on Johnson, let us now hear his advice on the subject of composition, and also consider Johnson's own method of writing.

Dr. Johnson recommended his friends to practise writing with despatch. He was himself a very rapid composer; indeed, no man more so, if we consider the accuracy and the weight of his compositions. "I wrote," said he, "the first seventy lines of the *Vanity of Human Wishes* in the course of one morning, in that small house beyond the church at Hampstead. The whole number was composed before I committed a single couplet to writing. The same method (of mental composition) I pursued in regard to the *Prologue* on opening Drury Lane Theatre. I did not afterwards change more than one word of it, and that at the remonstrance of Garrick. I did not think his criticism just, but it was necessary that he should be satisfied with what he was to utter."

Johnson also asserted, and prided himself upon it, that he wrote the *Life of Savage* in six-and-thirty hours. And the *Life of Savage* was long accounted one of the very best essays of the kind in the English language. But this was before the days of Macaulay's *Clive* and *Warren Hastings*.

Johnson was fond of talking of this achievement; and, on another occasion, when conversing

with Dr. Watson, the author of *Lectures on Rhetoric*, the dialogue is thus recorded by Boswell:—

Johnson. "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting: but then I sat up all night. I have also written six sheets in a day of translation from the French. I advised Chambers, and would advise every young man beginning to compose, to do it as fast as he can, to get a habit of having his mind to start promptly; it is so much more difficult to improve in speed than in accuracy."

Watson. "Dr. Hugh Blair has taken a week to compose a sermon."

Johnson. "Then, sir, that is for want of the habit of composing quickly, which I am insisting one should acquire. I myself have composed about forty sermons. I have begun a sermon after dinner, and sent it off by the post that night."

All persons would be curious to know whether the sermon the poor man wrote on the death of his wife was written as rapidly. We must gratify the reader with one passage on the death of his "dear Tetty:"—

"In him who believes the promise of the Saviour of the world, it can cause no disturbance to remember that this night his soul may be required of him; and he who suffers one of the

sharpest evils which this life can show amidst all its variety of misery; he that has lately been separated from the person whom a long participation of good and evil had endeared to him; he who has seen kindness snatched from his arms, and fidelity torn from his bosom; he whose ear is no more to be delighted with tender instruction, and whose virtue shall be no more awakened by the seasonable whispers of mild reproof, may yet look without horror on the tomb which encloses the remains of what he loved and honoured, as upon a place which, if it revives the sense of his life, may calm him with the hope of that state in which 'there shall be no more grief or separation.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST THING IN WRITING IS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY — WONDERFUL FEATS OF MENTAL COMPOSITION — GOOD POETS ARE GOOD PROSE WRITERS — PITT, BROUGHAM, ROMILLY, CECIL.

But, to return to the subject of slow composition. We have no doubt that what Johnson meant to imply was that habit of waiting for words, and attending rather to the expression than the thought, a habit which we have already characterised as leading to a stiff and unnatural style. Dr. Johnson, presuming, no doubt, that a writer could hardly sit down till he had something to say, would impress that our ideas should be written down in the order in which they present themselves, and also that the readiest words are the best—the best, that is, not absolutely; but the best that the particular writer could command, subject, of course, to any obvious corrections.

Robert Hall had, like Johnson, a singular facility for continuous mental composition. He

had only to think closely on a subject, and the topics became associated with appropriate terms and phrases. Writing was a pain and fatigue to him; he had, therefore, disciplined his mind to compose without the help of his pen. He could follow out a connected chain of ideas at pleasure, and accompany them with a series of elaborately finished sentences. Whoever adopts this system of mental composition, will, of course, find the practice of writing an admirable preparation for the art of speaking also; for, it is a habit which enables us to fix the memory upon some substantial mental product, instead of the eye being listlessly employed with only a few words at a time.

One of the greatest masters of composition, we have ever had the pleasure of knowing, evolved his mighty powers during a season of temporary blindness. From the experience of this gentleman there is little doubt but the pen is used too much by authors, and mental composition too little, to do full justice to their abilities. We should accustom ourselves to sketch our subject less on material tablets and far more on the tablets of the mind. In this quarter lies an intellectual mine, which yet remains to be worked—a powerful, though a dormant faculty—which, we have good reason for saying, admits of a degree of growth and develop-

ment almost incredible to those who have not seen mental composition, like mental arithmetic, fairly tried by a gradual course of systematic exercise.

An American gentleman lately astonished all the first chess-players in Europe by playing blindfold, and actually winning eight games of chess at the same time, though opposed by the best players of the day! What a wonderful power of mental composition or combination was there displayed! An eye-witness related to us how this wonderful man sat composedly in his chair behind a screen, with his head resting on his hand, dictating, in most cases without any appreciable time for thought, his move as fast as the umpire called out the move of his adversary, (say) "At table No. 1, Queen's pawn moves two squares." His memory as well as his patience was frequently tried by his adversary taking the usual time to decide on each move; whereas this master of the game only took time to consider in one single instance, and then he reflected for about two minutes, during which time his whole mind must have been abstracted from every other game, yet without losing the power of recalling the exact positions of each set of pieces when that interval of abstraction was over!

We will suppose, however, that this instance of mental combination was wholly exceptional, though

the power of playing a single game of chess, without seeing the board, has been evidenced by many persons—still, the following fact, which up to this time has never been published, will show how far the powers of an average mind may be developed in a similar respect:—

A gentleman of our acquaintance, for many years engaged in education, presented a few years since, some twenty pupils as candidates for confirmation. Being struck with their acuteness and general intelligence, we inquired as to the principles of their education, and heard that the master laid great stress on mental arithmetic.

Now, what is commonly called mental arithmetic, consists very little in any mental exercise, but chiefly in some easy rules tending to shorten the usual process, and to avoid the difficulty of any sustained mental effort. But we soon learnt that our friend's mental arithmetic was a severe exercise indeed: for, his method of sharpening the faculties consisted in making his pupils use the tablets of their minds as they used their slates, and to work by memory sums in the usual way. To say that such a row of ten figures as these—"5496388637," was multiplied or divided by one figure, and the product or quotient read off correctly, may seem incredible: yet, positively, there were few pupils in the

school of long standing who were not quite equal to the task. Even fourteen or fifteen figures,—for instance, imagine and enumerate such a row as 895603218763697,—even this could be multiplied or divided by some of the clever pupils, while a row of from twenty to twenty-five figures had been grasped in the mind and correctly multiplied or divided, and the product or quotient enunciated by the most promising boys in the school. Nay more, one pupil, now the Rev. ——, second on the list of Wranglers of his year, we are credibly informed, had operated correctly on a row of no less than thirty-five figures, without either pen or pencil! And all this self-command resulted from a little daily practice continued during the years of education, first of two or three easy figures, then of the same number of figures more difficult, till a fourth figure, or a fifth or a sixth, was successively added to the exercise.

Are we not, then, justified in saying that the power of mental composition admits of wonderful expansion? And, how valuable is this habit? How often do men lose themselves in their very inability to grasp all the terms and conditions, all the premises and data of a lengthened argument! And yet, for the orator, as we shall in due course explain, the same twofold operation of holding fast

the data and working out the natural conclusion is really indispensable.

But, to return to the case of Robert Hall—a writer who, in point of force and fluency combined with a copious yet chastened style of speech, has, perhaps, never been surpassed — notwithstanding his strong natural powers of composition, Robert Hall, when preparing for the press, composed with extreme slowness; simply because his standard of excellence was too high to be realised, and he could never satisfy himself. His perception of beauty was delicate and refined, and his taste was fastidious to excess. The consequence was, that when he sat down to compose he went on re-writing, improving, and rejecting one improvement after another; and often ending with the form of expression which had originally occurred. This habit of composition is not to be imitated. Hall used often to lament this slow and laborious habit he had formed: he used to say it gave an air of stiffness and formality to his style; so that he had very little satisfaction in anything he wrote. Dr. Gregory said, "Notwithstanding the exquisite harmony and beauty which characterised everything that Robert Hall has published, they were, even in point of felicity of diction and the majestic current and force of language, inferior to the winged

words that escaped from his lips, when 'his soul was enlarged' in the discharge of ministerial duty."

Southey's advice on the art of composition was very similar to Johnson's—to think of what you have to say, and to use the first words which present themselves; for, the first words will be the most natural; and afterwards to correct with a view to brevity and rhythm. From Southey's *Life* it appears that his advice on composition was frequently asked, and naturally so; for Southey's prose is equal to any English writing; and the *Life of Nelson*, in particular, is written in a style so lucid and natural, that it has rarely been surpassed. This is the opinion of the best judges—of Byron among others—and Byron is himself pronounced by Lord Macaulay, when speaking of that poet's correspondence, to be a perfect master of English prose.

Writing poetry is the best of all practice for prose. Poets have generally been good prose writers. Witness Cowley, Dryden, and Milton, whose prose has all the power without the affectation of Carlyle; witness Swift, Pope, Goldsmith, Cowper, Scott, Thomas Moore, and Macaulay.

Poetical exercises are recommended, on the same principle as translations from foreign lan-

guages, because they forbid the writer to shape his ideas to fit his words, and compel him to provide words adequate to his ideas.

"One thing I do know," says Southey; "to write poetry is the best preparation for writing prose. The verse-maker gets the habit of weighing the meanings and qualities of words, until he comes to know, as if by intuition, what particular word will best fit into the sentence. People talk of my style! I have only endeavoured to write plain English, and to put my thoughts into language which every one can understand."

"I am glad," writes Southey, on another occasion, "that you sometimes write verses, because, if ever you become a prose writer, you will find the great advantage of having written poetry. No poet ever becomes a mannerist in prose, nor falls into those tricks of style which show that the writer is always labouring to produce effect."

Of translating, considered as a preparation for prose writing, Southey says,—"I believe I derived great advantage from the practice sometimes of translating, sometimes of abridging, the historical books read at the Westminster School. And I think that a habit of speaking upon business might be acquired by giving orally the substance of what one has just read."

Sir Walter Scott also advises his son to the same effect:—

"You should exercise yourself frequently in trying to make translations of the passages that most strike you, trying to invest the sense of Tacitus in as good English as you can. This will give you a command of your own language, which no person will ever have who does not study English composition in early life."

And here we cannot help observing, that it is much to be lamented that more attention is not paid at our classical schools to elegant translations, written as well as oral, from Latin and Greek into English. We specify Latin and Greek, because their idioms differ from English so much more widely than the idioms of modern languages: though ladies may feel assured that translations from the French will add greatly to their command of their own language.

This inattention is to be lamented, because it is impossible to suggest any course of study as well calculated to form a good English scholar as that which is established at our classical schools. But the best of measures may fail for want of men. And, unhappily, written translations into English are rarely enforced, and when they are enforced they are too often allowed to be written in a care-

less way, without the least attention to the idioms of the respective languages: and indeed, a schoolboy's construing is rarely regarded as valuable for the sake of the English: it matters not how bad the English, provided it evinces a knowledge of the Latin or the Greek. Yet, how could we desire a better training for English writers or English orators than to place them in schools and colleges where they have to turn Latin and Greek into English all the day long—provided only that the English as well as the Latin receives the attention of a master who does not disdain to improve himself or pupil in his own language?

On this subject we must not omit the following clever confirmation of our opinion from Macaulay's *Life of William Pitt*:—

"His education, indeed, was well adapted to form a great parliamentary speaker. One argument, often urged against those classical studies which occupy so large a part of the early life of every gentleman bred in the south of our island is, that they prevent him from acquiring a command of his mother-tongue; and that it is not unusual to meet with a youth of excellent parts, who writes Ciceronian Latin prose and Horatian Latin alcaics, but who would find it impossible to express his thoughts in pure, perspicuous, and forcible English.

There may, perhaps, be some truth in this observation. But the classical studies of Pitt were carried on in a peculiar manner, and had the effect of enriching his English vocabulary, and of making him wonderfully expert in the art of constructing correct English sentences. His practice was to look over a page or two of a Greek or Latin author, to make himself master of the meaning, and then to read the passage straight forward into his own language. This practice, begun under his first teacher, Wilson, was continued under Pretyman. It is not strange that a young man of great abilities, who had been exercised daily in this way during ten years, should have acquired an almost unrivalled power of putting his thoughts, without premeditation, into words well selected and well arranged."

As to translation into English, we are happy to quote the following as Lord Brougham's account of the way Robertson, the historian, studied composition:—

"Translations from the Classics, and especially from the Greek, formed a considerable part of his labour. He considered this exercise as well calculated to give an accurate knowledge of our own language, by obliging us to weigh the shades of difference between words or phrases, and to find

the expression, whether by the selection of the terms or the turning of the idiom, which is required for a given meaning; whereas, when composing originally, the idea may be varied in order to suit the diction which most readily presents itself."

In this advice we are but too happy to be supported by the authority of Lord Brougham. We have long maintained that writers are often at the mercy of their words, and that many are prevented from doing full justice to their ideas, because there remains a large part of the language which they never have pressed into their service. But the very nature of translation compels us to extend our vocabulary as widely as our author, and thus it must naturally tend to bring an entirely new order of words into requisition.

Sir Samuel Romilly follows as a witness on the same side:—"I translated, composed, and endeavoured to form for myself a correct and elegant style; I translated the whole of Sallust, and a great part of Livy, Tacitus, and Cicero."

We are now speaking only of a copious vocabulary and facility of expression: still, there is little danger of our studying the words of men of exalted mind and pure taste without kindling with the same ethereal fire and imbibing the spirit of those noble companions of many a pliant hour; for,

books are of the nature of companions, with this advantage, that they never speak but when we are disposed to hear them, and mornings with the Waverley novels are as sure to exercise an influence as the society of Sir Walter himself.

On this subject the Rev. R. Cecil truly remarked, that "everything around us has an influence. Indeed, the influence of things is so great that, by familiarity with them, they insensibly lead us to principles and feelings which we before abhorred. I knew a man who took in a democratical paper only to laugh at it, but, at length, he had read the same things so often, that he began to think there must be some truth in them. A drop of water seems to have no influence on the stone, but in the end it will wear its way through." So, drop by drop, and hour after hour, we shall insensibly catch the hue and complexion, and the very tone and harmony, of those great writers, whose thoughts and feelings are ever passing through our minds.

Every traveller knows how readily our countrymen, after years of residence on the Continent, become foreign in feeling, taste and sentiment, as well as language. This is only another kind of testimony to the certain influence of mind with mind, and the way we are affected by the sphere in which we live.

CHAPTER V.

WHY POETRY GROWS SCARCE—LAST TOUCHES GIVE GREAT EFFECT—STRANGE ERRORS OF THE PRESS—STYLE EXEMPLIFIED BY DR. DODD'S LAST DYING SPEECH AND CONFESSION—ROBERT HALL—JANE EYRE.

No man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre. And it might diminish our admiration were we allowed to see even Genius in dishabille. All the company could make the egg stand on end when once Columbus had shown the way. So, to lay open the whole process and workings of Genius, to betray the secrets of the magician's cave, or to trace the same idea, from its first glimpse and rude conception to its final brilliancy and effect in a pointed and transparent sentence—this may greatly diminish our surprise, but at the same time it will powerfully incite us to imitation.

Whoever desires, as it were, to peep into the glass hive of Genius, and to see its accumulated treasures slowly and laboriously distilling into their

respective cells, would do well to read Moore's *Life of Sheridan*. For, there he will find some of the best sayings of that witty author of the *School for Scandal* in every stage of their formation: first wordy and laborious, then in a somewhat neater expression, and finally as they now appear, with point and brevity, brilliancy and ease.

This, I trust, will illustrate the secret of all lasting fame, comprised as it is in one word—Effect. The patient finish, and even the mechanical clearing away of all superfluous materials, may make all the difference between a statue which seems to live and breathe, and a dull block of chiselled marble. Too much power and too great a profusion of ornament, as well as too little, may be fatal to the desired effect. The Muse, like other ladies, when over-dressed, may repel admirers whom a simple propriety of ornament were sure to win. The sublime is so nearly allied to the ridiculous that the least addition may turn the scale; and, just as want of harmony may make grating to the ear, so want of finish and proportion may make jarring to the feelings, lines which by their essential beauty should have charmed for ever.

A very small part of the world is made up of critics, but a very large part is made up of men and women. Not one reader in a hundred can

judge, but nearly all can feel. So, the Poet's fame depends on the effect he can produce. The mere tinsel of language, or a profuse display of gorgeous colouring, may dazzle or confound, but very different is the truthful simplicity of those choice pieces to be lisped by our children's children.

Lord Macaulay, most happily, has compared a certain description of Poetry to the pattern of a Turkey carpet. There is a general picturesque appearance; but, when once you come to examine, all is confusion, with very little meaning or expression. Some Poems remind us of certain of Mr. Turner's Paintings. No man of taste will say that Coleridge, Shelley, or Keats could not write; no one will say that Mr. Turner could not paint, least of all when he sees side by side with Claude in the National Gallery a picture which some of our first landscape painters pronounce superior. Nay, more; few will deny that those Poets never played such tricks with their pen; nor that Painter with his brush, but some other Poet or other Painter could discern the *disjecta membra poetæ*, the power and the hand of a master, even amidst the wildest caprices of their erratic imaginations.

But, for all this, common observers would hardly distinguish certain of Mr. Turner's paintings from the confused mixture on his pallet; and

common readers would see, in many of the writings of the school of Coleridge, rather the materials for a poem than the fair proportions of a finished composition. The finest brilliants may lose half their effect in the setting; too many may be as fatal as too few; and many a poem is like the Koh-i-noor diamond, which from want (as was *supposed*) of a little cutting, could hardly be distinguished from so much glass. And—if we may venture on a similar illustration—not a few compositions, from the cluster of beauties without relief, remind us of the royal crown as shown us in the Tower, of which the gems (as then arranged) so far killed and cancelled each other's lustre, that the effect was little more than that of the white sugar-candy on a wedding-cake.

As to poetry, the present age is very unfavourable to it. The world is too philosophical, too utilitarian, and too matter-of-fact. When Coleridge was at the Christ's Hospital School, his old master, Dr. Bowyer, used to lay all the stock-properties of the stage poetical under a ban. "D'ye talk of Hippocrene, boy!—there's no such thing. You mean the horsepond. Talk of Castalia, boy!—all nonsense. Say, the pump in the yard." And, in the same spirit, we once heard a celebrated master tell a boy, who had brought in the well-

known ending, *ad sidera jactans*, when the subject of his longs and shorts was "a wild bull in a crowd," that it was absurd to suppose that any bull, however wild, could toss an old woman as high as the planet Jupiter. So, partly because we are tired of all the old similes, apostrophes, and all the turns and trickery of verse—partly because all those beauties of nature too subtle for prose, but still intelligible to prosaic people, are as old and trite on paper as the Bridge of Sighs is on printed cardboard—and partly because, in these days of railway literature, there is too little repose in the writer to see castles in the air, or in the reader to care whether he does or no—and because, in short, we are too busy about realities to give that pretty maid Fancy permission to go out for an airing quite as often as her fresh and roseate hues imperatively require;—for all these reasons, original poetry is ten times more difficult to write, and a hundred times more difficult to sell. Indeed, pure poetry never did, and never will find many readers. Sir Walter Scott's *Lay* and his *Marmion* were popular, not half as much for the poetry as for the prose or the story that was in them. Just as the *Pilgrim's Progress* was popular, not so much for its piety as for castles, dwarfs, and giants, which added diversion to its pages.

There are two hard words introduced of late years. We are told that the sphere of Genius now-a-days is not subjective but objective—that is, not inside but out. When the mind has nothing external to feed on, it feeds on itself. When shut off from fact, it runs into the realms of fancy. Byron and Scott both hit the happy medium between the two—between the objective and the subjective—the visible and the invisible—castles in the air and castles of feudal times. The school of Coleridge and Shelley dealt too much with the invisible—creations of the brain instead of the reflections of nature. Wordsworth erred on the same side; but he was also too minute. His vision for beauties was perfectly microscopic, and he forgot no one else could identify them with the naked eye. But even the fields of fancy and imagination are a kind of manor which may easily be exhausted, especially as regards those kinds of winged creatures which are not too delicate for the taste profane. Indeed, things have come to such a pass, that whether our imagination is set roaming skyward, or whether we take a ticket for a trip up the Rhine, it is very hard to carry back to the gentlemen of Paternoster Row anything they have not been offered many a time before.

To give one more illustration, there is an old nursery rhyme that says,—

> "Old woman, old woman, up in the sky,
> What are you doing up so high?
> I am sweeping the cobwebs off the sky,
> And I shall be back again by and bye."

Now, if we suppose this to have been a poetical old lady, perhaps she has swept the cobwebs—"the forms of things unseen"—so clean from the sky, that the poet's eye, "in fine frenzy rolling," looks skyward in vain, and "turns them to shapes" no more.

But what is the reason that so many works, which have called forth the repeated applauses of critics, and the enthusiastic praises of a host of admirers, have passed away as the fashion of a season, and made room for others, to earn as short-lived honours as themselves? Because they have not been true to nature—because this applause has been founded rather on the rules and measures of the critic than on the involuntary admiration of the man—because these works have evinced more cleverness than genius, moulded and shaped to the caprices of the day, and not in unison or harmony with the eternal sympathies of the human heart. What is true to nature is true always; and never

fails in touching a responsive chord, so long as the heart of man shall beat the same. It is not enough to satisfy the judgment or to gain the cool approbation of unimpassioned reason; the writer who aspires to lasting fame must enchain the feelings, must enchant the imagination, and must touch the heart.

Horace says,—

"Non satis est pulchra esse poëmata; dulcia sunto."

In other words, it is not enough that the Muse be merely handsome—the finest features may be cold and passionless—she must have those charms that win us, and lead us willing captives in her train.

A few touches from the hand of a master may give wonderful effect even to what were otherwise a dull composition—especially touches from such a master as always bears the inattention, the impatience, and all the literary deficiencies of ordinary readers in his mind. Even such aids as seem mechanical are not to be despised. Paley said that that was the best style which was the most independent of punctuation. Yet punctuation and a judicious selection of types make easy reading, and so far they add effect to the best writing. No one knew this better than Southey.

Southey prided himself on his knowledge of typography, and would refer to the style of his title-pages in proof of his skill. A printer once remarked of him, that Mr. Southey was the only man he ever knew who could tell how a page would look before it was set up.

Mere paper and type, with a judicious arrangement of paragraphs, and suitable spaces and capitals, tend very much to enliven a page, and to sustain the attention of the reader. "A plain tale may be marred by the telling"—so, the weariness of the eyes, as well as of the ears, may put the mind out of humour with the story. Every author has to learn that there are secrets worth knowing in the art of bookmaking, besides the excellence of the composition. The leading publishers and printers in London will render great assistance; still, every author should study typography, and be able to judge for himself.

Distinct punctuation is an art which will repay attentive study. It is excellently taught, as also are some other points most essential in composition, by William Cobbett's *English Grammar*, a work amusing, as well as instructive, in parts; especially where he criticises a king's speech, and shows almost as many errors in it as there are clauses.

Milton made a great point of correct punctuation. Addison was equally particular. Lord Jeffrey was famed for his skill in giving effect by little points and touches of a master's hand, by which many an essay which he received as Editor of the *Edinburgh Review* was set forth with a boldness of relief and lucid arrangement, which caused the author an agreeable surprise.

Lord Cockburn says of Lord Jeffrey, his "value as *Editor* was incalculable. He had not only to revise and arrange each number after its parts were brought together, but he had much difficult and delicate work to perform. He had to train authors — to discern the public taste — to suggest subjects. Inferior to these excellences, but still important, was his dexterity in revising the writings of others. Without altering the general tone or character of the composition, he had great skill in leaving out defective ideas or words, and in so aiding the original by lively or graceful touches, that reasonable authors were surprised and charmed in seeing how much better they looked than they thought they would."

The prose-writing of Cowley, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, and Hooker, is the finest of the old school of sterling writers, though it is almost impossible to read them with the careless facility and with

that kind of short-hand reading which is compatible with the shorter sentences and more lucid arrangement of the writers of the present century.

And here it may be useful to authors to observe that printers, even the best in London, are as little to be trusted with correcting the press as in the choice of type. One of the most singular errors, whether an error clerical or typographical, will be found in Dr. Johnson's definition of the verb "To sit." The passage quoted in his dictionary as an authority is, "Asses are ye that sit in judgment, (Judges, v. 10.)" But the verse is—"Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way."

It occurred to the author in two instances to have narrowly escaped an error—whether within the province of the printer or himself is not quite evident—which would have left the chief point out of his story. In another instance, the printer made him a present of a word, which, though it can hardly be mentioned without danger of some readers remembering it as too expressive to be thrown away—he could not quite consent to adopt, for, he was made to say that he "had always a strong instinct against everything of a *snob*-ocratic tendency."

In returning the proof-sheets to the printer, the

author remarked that he was much amused by the mistake. "Really," said the printer, "gentlemen should not place such unlimited confidence in the eyesight of our hard-worked and half-blinded reader of proofs; for, I am ashamed to say that we utterly ruined one poet through a ludicrous misprint."

"Indeed! and what was the unhappy line?"

"Why, sir; the poet intended to say,

'See the pale martyr in a sheet of fire;'

instead of which we made him say,

'See the pale martyr *with his shirt on fire.*'

Of course the reviewers made the most of a blunder so entertaining to their readers, and the poor gentleman was never heard of more in the field of literature."

Sir James Mackintosh distinguishes three periods in the progress of English style.

The first period extended from Sir Thomas More to Lord Clarendon. This was the Latin age, or the pedantic age, of our style.

The second period extended from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the classic age of Pope, Addison, Walpole, and Goldsmith.

The third period may be called the Rhetorical, of which Johnson was the founder. At this time

originated the artificial style of heavily-balanced periods and studied antitheses. As in the school of Addison we see the variety and richness of nature, so the school of Johnson may be exemplified by the uniformity of a Dutch garden. "All their words were thrown into one mould, and their periods came up in the same shape."

This leaden age seems now to have passed away, and most writers express themselves in the language of common life. In this school, Robert Hall is, perhaps, the first of all English writers, as regards style. He has all the ease and nature of Addison and of Southey; but, at the same time, he is more nervous and compact. While he avoids the frigid and cumbersome phraseology of Johnson, he avoids, also, tasking the reader's attention by the many monosyllables and particles of Addison. As compared with Southey, Robert Hall's sentences are far more carefully constructed, and that with quite as little appearance of being studied.

Before we leave this subject of ideas in buckram, or, sense in a state of petrification, the true spirit of the purest Johnsonese, and all its marvellous power to chill the warmth of nature and to freeze the genial current of the soul, shall be exemplified by one of the most curious passages we have ever met with — no other than a sentence

from the last dying speech and confession of, unhappily, a distinguished preacher and writer of the last century, Dr. Dodd, who was hanged at Tyburn on the 25th of May, 1777, for forging a bond for 4,200*l.* with the name of a nobleman once his pupil, Lord Chesterfield:—

"I was led away from religious strictness by the delusions of show, and the delights of voluptuousness. I never knew or attended to the calls of frugality, or the needful minuteness of painful economy. Vanity and pleasure, into which I plunged, required expense disproportionate to my income; expense brought me distress, and importunate distress urged me to temporary fraud."

This apology was truth. It was written at a moment too awful for anything but the truth. Yet how strangely falsetto was the style! Truth, in such attire, is like beauty in the formal head-gear and straight waists and hoops of our great-grandmammas.

We should ask indulgence for a digression as strange as we now purpose to introduce, but we know how interested the world is in the full particulars of a hanging story; and, the painful history of Dr. Dodd has become almost a part of classic literature. Horace Walpole gives some account of the execution, and says,—"Dr. Dodd was turned

off this morning at Tyburn, in a drenching shower of rain, by the side of a horse-stealer;" and with much probability we may say, on the exact site of No. 7 Connaught Square. The Earl of Carlisle wrote a particular account of the execution to that most fashionable of wits, George Selwyn. Selwyn had a morbid passion for horrible sights; he even went to Paris to see Damien broken on the wheel, and actually attracted the notice of the executioner, who said, "Make way for this gentleman; he is an Englishman, and an amateur!" At Tyburn there was a brazier's window, which commanded a view of the gallows; this, like similar windows in the Old Bailey, used to be engaged for any interesting execution, and George Selwyn was the best of customers,—and, probably, James Boswell, too; for Boswell kept a suit of clothes expressly for indulging a similar morbid curiosity—"*emptâ dolore voluptas.*" George Selwyn proposes, in one of his letters, to bespeak the brazier's window on some great occasion.

No doubt the unhappy Doctor was pronounced fully resigned to his fate; but the truth is, he clung most tenaciously to life. Johnson said, "Dr. Dodd, sir, would have given both his hands and both his legs to have lived." Indeed, Dodd charged the executioner "not to pull his legs"

with a view of shortening his sufferings, having arranged that the then famous Dr. Pott should have a room, and all appliances to boot, awaiting the instant removal of the body, when the usual half-hour had expired. The executioner was said to have been bribed to adjust the knot in the way least likely to be fatal. But all in vain.

Future antiquaries may be glad to know that the hangman's name in those days was Mr. Edward Dennis, who, only three years later, was himself sentenced to death for having taken part in Lord George Gordon's row. George Selwyn could not miss such an opportunity of quoting,—

> "Nec lex est justior ulla,
> Quam necis artifices arte perire suâ."

Whether it was on that occasion that some one first moralised on the words "*Respice funem,*"—Think of the (*rope's*) end, or whether it was original in Sir Walter Scott, we are not informed. Sir Walter might have learnt it of Buchanan.

For the rest of Dr. Dodd's history, and the admirable letter written in his name to King George III. by Dr. Johnson, the curious must be referred to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, by the Index. —But we were speaking of Style.

Aristotle remarks that words of foreign extraction, which we may instance by the Latin style or

the Johnsonese, are usefully employed to elevate a trivial or familiar subject; but at the same time they make the style very frigid; such words do not go to the heart. The truth of this remark will appear to any one who will compare the effect of our native Saxon with words of Latin root; a comparison which will be illustrated by the following passages from the life of Robert Hall:—

"In one of my early interviews with Mr. Hall," said Dr. Gregory, "I used the word felicity three or four times in rather quick succession. He asked, 'Why do you say felicity, sir? Happiness is a better word, more musical, and genuine English, coming from the Saxon.' 'Not more musical, I think, sir.' 'Yes, more musical; and so are words derived from the Saxon generally. Listen, sir: 'My heart is smitten, and withered like grass,' there's plaintive music. Listen again, sir: 'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice;' there's cheerful music.' 'Yes, but *rejòice* is French.' 'True, but all the rest is Saxon, and *rejoice* is almost out of tune with the other words. Listen again: 'Thou hast delivered my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling;' all Saxon, sir, except *delivered.* I could think of the word *tears,* sir, till I wept. Then, again, for another noble specimen, and

almost all good Saxon English: 'Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

Again, in Robert Hall's Sermon, one of the very best and most celebrated in our language, on *Modern Infidelity*, Dr. Gregory says, that after he had written down the striking apostrophe which runs thus:—"Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not *penetrate?*"—he asked, "Did I say *penetrate*, sir, when I preached it?" "Yes." "Do you think, sir, I may venture to alter it? For no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity—for *penetrate* put *pierce: pierce* is the word, sir, and the only word to be used there."

"There are people," says Landor, "who think they write and speak finely, merely because they have forgotten the language in which their fathers and mothers used to talk to them." Yet in this language, if they know how to use it, lies the chief power and resource of an effective writer.

"Lockhart says, 'The strongest, purest, and

least observed of all lights, is daylight; and Scott's talk was (as pretended) common-place, just as sunshine is, which gilds the most indifferent objects, and adds brilliancy to the brightest. There was deeper knowledge in Scott's talk than was 'dreamt of in their philosophy,' only clothed in plain, familiar, household words, not dressed up in any pedantic masquerade of antithesis."

"The authoress of *Jane Eyre*," says her biographer, "was remarkably felicitous in her choice of words. Still, she possessed no such talent as could dispense with a nice discrimination in selecting words. One set of words was the truthful mirror of her thoughts: no others, however apparently identical in meaning, would do. She would wait patiently searching for the right term, till it presented itself to her. This care," says her biographer, "makes her style present the finish of mosaic. Each component part, however small, has been dropped into the right place, and she never wrote down a sentence until she clearly understood what she wanted to say, had deliberately chosen the words, and had arranged them in their right order. Her manuscript might show the erasure of an entire sentence, but rarely the alteration of any of the words."

CHAPTER VI.

POETRY, WHY OBSCURE—COLLINS, GRAY, SHELLEY, COLERIDGE, BURKE, LORD ERSKINE—INTERESTING PASSAGES FROM CARLYLE—THE WAY *NOT* TO PREACH LIKE ST. PAUL.

With regard to Poetry, we must observe that there is nothing in which tastes more widely differ. Some readers are unmoved, where others are in raptures: some are struck with the sublime, where others find only the unmeaning and obscure.

It may be useful, therefore, to give a few passages, showing the opinion of our first writers on that obscurity which characterises a certain description of poetry.

Campbell remarked of Collins, that a cloud of obscurity sometimes rests on his highest conceptions, arising from the fineness of his associations and the daring sweep of his allusions; but the shadow is transitory, and interferes very little with the light of his imagery or the warmth of his feelings. Gray's obscurity, he says also, never arises

from undefined ideas—their meaning is rather latent than confused. Gray requires reperusal and attention—like paintings on glass, which want a strong light to give out the perfect radiance of their colouring.

"Mr. Gray," says Goldsmith, "wants the Greek writers' advantages." He has not the lively Athenians to address. "He speaks to a people not easily impressed with new ideas; extremely tenacious of the old; with difficulty warmed, and as slowly cooling again. How unsuited to our national character is that species of poetry which rises upon us with unexpected flights; where we must hastily catch the thought, or it flies from us; and where we must largely partake of the Poet's enthusiasm in order to taste his beauties."

Sir James Mackintosh said that Coleridge's talents—he meant his power of execution—were not equal to his genius, and did not do justice to the poetry of his imagination. While the Poet "bodies forth the forms of things unseen," and "turns them to shapes"—if he wants other persons to see them, he must turn them to distinct and definite shapes: and here Coleridge failed; and whether he failed from the ethereal nature of his visions, and because language was too gross a vehicle of his transcendent thoughts; or because he

was careless in the use of language, it matters not. The reader feels lost and dizzy—reads again without effect—then turns in preference to where Castalia runs, shallower perhaps, but in a smoother and more transparent stream. Dibdin truly says:—"Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* are the brightest gems of his Muse; but even these are not divested of that occasional air of dreamy mysticism by which his usual efforts are characterised."

Such compositions have, as Pindar tells us, a voice only for the initiated, but are keyless mysteries to all others. Dibdin proceeds to say, that "Coleridge's subjects were, in a measure, unearthly. If he chose a cottage-girl at her spinning-wheel, that wheel never went round, nor did that girl spin, in the ordinary routine of such an occupation. To rural characters he sometimes gave the colouring of philosophical abstraction. To Coleridge's ear, the roaring of the ocean's incoming tide, or the lifting up of its swelling waves, spoke a language which he only could understand, and imparted ideas which he only could appreciate."

This power of appreciation Carlyle, in one of his finest passages, assigns to the Michael Angelo of music, Christopher Gluck. Carlyle is speaking of the brave old De Launay, worthy indeed of a

nobler charge, and of the destruction of the Bastile:—"Harmless he sat there while unarmed: but the king's fortress, meanwhile, could, might, would, or should in no wise be surrendered, save to the king's messenger: 'One old man's life is worthless, so it be lost with honour; but think, ye brawling *canaille*, how will it be when a whole Bastile springs skyward!' And yet withal he could not do it. Hast thou considered how each man's heart is so tremulously responsible to the hearts of all men? hast thou noted how omnipotent is the very sound of many men? How their shriek of indignation palsies the strong soul! their howl of contumely withers with unfelt pangs? Gluck confessed that the ground-tone of the noblest passages in one of his noblest operas was the voice of the populace he had heard at Vienna crying to their Kaiser, 'Bread! bread!' Great is the combined voice of men, the utterance of their *instincts*, which are truer than their thoughts: it is the greatest a man encounters among the sounds and shadows which make up this world of time."

So there is music which only a Gluck can hear. "*The heavens declare the glory of God,*" but the brutish man cannot hear the message—"*The firmament showeth his handy work;*" but little indeed can the untutored decipher of those hieroglyphics

which the Most High hath graven, as with a pen of iron, on the rocks for ever.

Coleridge and Shelley belong to a school of Poetry which reminds us of a story told in Martin Luther's *Table-talk*:—"A certain lazy monk, too idle to say his prayers, used to repeat the alphabet, and then add, 'Take, O Lord, these letters, and put them together even as Thou wilt.'" So, these indistinct Poets, with their crowded and half-told visions, seem to say to the reader, "Take these poetical sentiments and these poetical terms, and put them together to your own fancy." The truth is, a perfect and finished poem, like the *Deserted Village*, is one thing, but the mere materials of a poem, like Coleridge's smaller pieces, are another.

These opinions we may still further illustrate from the writings of Sir James Mackintosh. He says of Johnson:—"Whenever the understanding alone is sufficient for poetical criticism, the decisions of Johnson are generally right. But the beauties of poetry must be felt before their causes are investigated. There is a poetical sensibility which, in the progress of the mind, becomes as distinct a power as even a musical ear or a picturesque eye. Without a considerable degree of this sensibility, it is as vain for a man of the greatest understanding to speak of the higher beauties of poetry, as it

is for a blind man to speak of colours. To adopt the warmest sentiments of poetry, to realise its boldest imagery, to yield to every impulse of enthusiasm, to submit to the illusions of fancy, and to retire with the poet to his ideal world—these were dispositions wholly foreign from the worldly sagacity and the stern shrewdness of Dr. Johnson."

It was said of the Grecian painter, Timanthes, "*Intelligitur plus semper quàm pingitur*"—There is always more meaning in his compositions than is actually expressed. This latent meaning is what Horace implies by *disjecta membra poetæ*—those disjointed members which only a poet can put together—or, like the fragments of the Torso, in which only the sculptor can see ideal beauty. It is well-known that Sir Walter Scott was pleased by a class of novels which to others were very commonplace and void of interest; "and this," says Lockhart, "was because the brilliancy of his own imagination greatly sustained the delusion, giving life and warmth to vapid colours, and precision to the trembling outline." This also may account for the fact that certain ardent admirers of the fair sex invest even the most passable beauties with charms they do not possess.

Sir W. Scott observed, that he thought Wordsworth showed want of judgment in choosing sub-

jects in which the popular mind cannot sympathise. He said, "It is unwise and unjust to himself. I do not compare myself, in point of imagination, with him—far from it; for his is naturally exquisite, and highly cultivated from constant exercise. But I can see as many castles in the clouds as any man: the error is not in you yourself receiving deep impressions from slight tints, but in supposing that precisely the same sort of impression must arise in the minds of men, otherwise of kindred feeling; or that the commonplace folk of the world can derive such inductions at any time or under any circumstances.

"You are too exuberant in ornament," said Southey to Ebenezer Elliott. "This makes you indistinct; but distinctness is the great charm of narrative poetry. See how beautifully it is exemplified in Spencer."

Goldsmith made an admirable remark of Gray—the same lesson taught in other words by Roger Ascham—"To think as a wise man, but to speak as the common people."

"We cannot, without regret, behold talents so capable of giving pleasure to all, exerted in efforts that, at best, can amuse only the few. We cannot behold this rising poet seeking fame among the learned, without hinting to him the advice that

Isocrates used to give his scholars—*Study the people.* This study it is that has conducted the great masters of antiquity up to immortality. Pindar himself, of whom our modern Lyrist is an imitator, appears entirely guided by it. He adapted his works entirely to the dispositions of his countrymen. Irregular, enthusiastic, and quick in transition, he wrote for a people inconstant, of warm imagination, and exquisite sensibility. He chose the most popular subjects, and all his allusions are to customs well known, in his days, to the meanest person.

Gray seized the forms of Pindar, but addressed himself to the spirit of about one reader in a thousand. So, many preachers form their style after St. Paul, as they think—that is, they forget that St. Paul addressed his arguments to the character of his hearers, and used only such illustrations as were familiar to them, and all they copy is the only part they should avoid—namely, the topics which no one wants, and the illustrations which few can understand.

The principle of our selection in giving the following passages from Burke is this:—First, that they are among the most celebrated passages in English literature; and, secondly, that while they convey invaluable truths, they exemplify the

powers of the English language in all the strength and vigour of nature. The prose of Milton, though very powerful, inclines to large sentences and ponderous words. The prose of Lord Macaulay is rather flowing than flexible: there is more art than nature; you can never forget the actor in his part; but the prose of Burke, though in some respects inferior, has this peculiarity, that it is both forcible and flexible: the nervous, racy English of a free, out-spoken Briton.

And first, all persons who think that poverty and piety must go together, and who can see no advantage in a position of wealth and respectability in those Ministers of the Gospel who are expected to speak with authority to those in high places, would do well to consider this celebrated argument of Burke:—

"The people of England know how little influence the teachers of religion are likely to have with the wealthy and powerful of long standing, and how much less with the newly fortunate, if they appear in a manner no way assorted with those with whom they must associate, and over whom they must even exercise, in some cases, something like an authority. What must they think of that body of teachers, if they see it in no part above the establishment of their domestic

servants? If the poverty were voluntary, there might be some difference. Strong instances of self-denial operate powerfully on our minds; and a man who has no wants, has obtained great freedom and firmness, and even dignity. But as the mass of any description of men are but men, and their poverty cannot be voluntary, that disrespect which attends on all lay poverty will not depart from the ecclesiastical. Our provident Constitution has, therefore, taken care that those who are to instruct presumptuous ignorance—those who are to be censors over insolent vice—should neither incur their contempt, nor live upon their alms. Nor will it tempt the rich to a neglect of the true medicine of their minds. For these reasons, while we provide first, and with a parental solicitude, for the poor, we have not relegated Religion, like something we were ashamed to show, to obscure municipalities or rustic villages. No: we *will have her to exalt her mitred front* in Courts and Parliaments; we will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life, and blended with all the classes of society. The people of England will show to the haughty potentates of the world, and to their talking sophisters, that a free, a generous, and informed nation, honours the high magistrates of its Church. They can see, without

pain or grudging, an Archbishop precede a Duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham, or a Bishop of Winchester, in possession of ten thousand pounds a-year, and cannot conceive why it is in worse hands than estates to the like amount in the hands of this earl or that squire!"

Burke then proceeds most feelingly to explain how wealth has no privilege as to the burthens of the heart. Many a rich man has sighed in response to these expressive words:—

"The English people are satisfied, that to the great the consolations of religion are as necessary as its instructions. They, too, are among the unhappy,—they feel personal pain and domestic sorrow. In these they have no privilege, but are subject to pay their full contingent to the contributions levied on mortality. They want this sovereign balm under their gnawing cares and anxieties, which, being less conversant about the limited wants of animal life, range without limit, and are diversified by infinite combinations, in the wild and unbounded regions of Imagination. Some charitable dole is wanting to these, our often very unhappy brethren, to fill the gloomy void in minds which have nothing on earth to hope or fear,—something to relieve the killing languor and overlaboured lassitude of those who have nothing to

do,—something to excite an appetite for existence in the palled satiety which attends on all pleasures that may be bought, where nature is not left to her own process, where even desire is anticipated, and, therefore, enjoyment defeated, by meditated schemes and contrivances of delight."

Our next extract is one to which allusion is often made. Burke is inveighing against the rapacity of that government in India which had grasped at everything and done nothing.

"With us," said Burke, "no pride erects stately monuments, which repair the mischief which pride had produced, and adorn a country out of its own spoils. England has erected no churches, no hospitals, no palaces, no schools. England has built no bridges, made no high-roads, cut no navigation, dug out no reservoirs. Every other conqueror of every other description has left some monument of either state or beneficence behind him. Were we to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed during the inglorious period of our dominion by anything better than the ourang-outang or the tiger."

The next extract will throw light on the caste of the Hindoo:—

"Your Lordships are born to hereditary honours

in the chief of your houses, the rest mix with the people; but with the Gentoos, they who are born noble can never fall into any second rank. They are divided into four orders; an eternal barrier is placed between them. A man who is born in the highest caste, which at once unites what would be tantamount in this country to the dignity of the Peerage and the ennobled sanctity of the Episcopal character; the Brahmin who sustains those characters, if he lose his caste, does not fall into an inferior order; he is thrown at once out of all ranks of society; he is precipitated from the proudest elevation of respect and honour to a bottomless abyss of contempt; from purity to pollution, from sanctity to profanation. No honest occupation is open to him; his children are no longer his children. The parent loses that name; the conjugal bond is dissolved. Few survive this most terrible of all calamities. To speak to an Indian of his caste is to speak to him of his all.

"But the rule of caste gives one power more to fortune; for it is singular that caste may be lost, not only by voluntary crimes, but by certain involuntary sufferings, disgraces, and pollutions, utterly out of their power to prevent. Those who have patiently submitted to imprisonment; those who have not flinched from the scourge; those

who have been as unmoved as marble under the torture; those who have laughed at the menaces of death itself, have instantly given way when it has been attempted to subject them to any of the pollutions by which they lose caste. Tyranny is armed against them with a greater variety of weapons than are found in its ordinary stores. In the course of this trial your Lordships will see with horror the use which Mr. Hastings has made, through his wicked instruments, chosen from the natives themselves, of those superadded means of oppression."

Now we come to a passage which paints man as the cruel scourge to man. How painful an illustration of the lines of Goldsmith!—

> "While crouching lions wait their hapless prey,
> And savage men, more murderous still than they."

If there is a finer passage in the English language than the following, we have never seen it:—

"When at length Hyder found that he had to do with men who would either sign no convention, or whom no signature could bind, and who were the determined enemies of human intercourse itself, he decreed to make the country possessed by those incorrigible and predestined criminals a memorable example to mankind. He resolved, in the gloomy recesses of a mind capacious of such things, to

leave the whole Carnatic an everlasting monument of vengeance, and to put perpetual desolation as a barrier between him and those, against whom the faith which holds the moral elements of the world together was no protection.

"He became at length so confident of his force, so collected in his might, that he made no secret whatever of his dreadful resolution. Having terminated his disputes with every enemy and every rival—who buried their mutual animosities in their common detestation against the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot—he drew from every quarter whatever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments in the arts of destruction, and compounding all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation, into one black cloud, hung for a while on the declivities of the mountains. While the authors of all those evils were stupidly gazing on this menacing meteor, which blackened all their horizon, it suddenly burst, and poured down the whole of its contents upon the plains of the Carnatic. Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell. All the horrors of war before known or heard of, were mercy to that new havoc. A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house,

destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming villages, in parts were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness of function, fathers torn from children, husbands from wives, enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the goading spears of drivers, and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity in an unknown and strange land. Those who were able to evade the tempest, fled to the walled cities. But escaping from fire, sword, and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine. The alms of the settlement in this dreadful emergency were certainly liberal, and all was done that private charity could do. But it was a people in beggary —it was a nation which stretched out its hands for food. For months together, those creatures of sufferance, whose very excess and luxury, in their most plenteous days, had fallen short of the allowance of our austerest fasts—silent, patient, resigned, without sedition or disturbance, almost without complaint, perished by a hundred a-day in the streets of Madras—every day seventy at least laid their bodies on the streets, or on the glacis of Tanjore, and expired of famine in the granary of India.

"For eighteen months, without intermission,

this destruction raged, from the gates of Madras to the gates of Tanjore. And so completely did those masters in their art, Hyder Ali, and his more ferocious son, absolve themselves of their impious vow, that when the British army traversed, as they did, the Carnatic, for hundreds of miles in all directions, through the whole line of their march, they saw not one man, not one woman, not one child, not one four-footed beast of any description whatever. One dead uniform silence reigned over the whole region. The hurricane of war passed through every part of the central provinces of the Carnatic. The Carnatic is a country not much inferior in extent to England. Figure to yourself, Mr. Speaker, the land in whose representative chair you sit; figure to yourself the form and fashion of your sweet and cheerful country from Thames to Trent, north and south, and from the Irish to the German Sea, east and west, emptied and disembowelled (may God avert the omen of our crimes!) by so accomplished a desolation!"

In examining some details of the cruelty to which the Indian tax-gatherers urged their officer, he thus gave his philosophy of outrage. And this is a very instructive lesson. It explains many an act of wild cruelty, unlike the conduct of any reasonable being; as when a poor sailor, an ap-

prentice, or, as recently, a weak-minded schoolboy, becomes the victim of murderous passion.

"It is the nature of tyranny and rapacity never to learn moderation from the ill success of first oppressions. On the contrary, all oppressors, thinking highly of the methods dictated by their nature, attribute the frustration of their designs to the want of sufficient rigour. Then they redouble the efforts of their impotent cruelty, which producing, as they must ever produce, new disappointments, they grow irritated against the objects of their rapacity; and their rage, fury, and malice, implacable because unprovoked, recruiting and reinforcing their avarice, their vices are no longer human. From cruel men they are transformed into savage beasts, with no other vestige of reason left but what serves to furnish the inventions and refinements of ferocious subtlety for purposes of which beasts are incapable."

If this passage explains the philosophy of outrage, the following from Lord Erskine will explain what is often equally unintelligible, the blindness and the almost suicidal folly of notorious criminals:—

"His conduct upon those occasions may be thought irrational. But, thank God, guilt was never a rational thing; it distorts all the faculties

of the mind, it perverts them, it leaves a man no longer in the free use of his reason, it puts him into confusion. He has recourse to such miserable and absurd expedients for covering his guilt as, all those who are used to sit in the seat of judgment know, have been the cause of the detection of half the villanies of the world. God forbid that guilt should ever leave a man the undisturbed use of his faculties. For, as guilt never rose from a true use of our rational faculties, so it is very frequently subversive of them. God forbid that prudence, the supreme director of all the virtues, should ever be employed in the service of any of the vices. No; it is never found where justice does not accompany it; and if it is ever attempted to bring it into the service of the vices, it immediately subverts their cause. It tends to their discovery, and, I hope and trust, finally to their utter destruction."

To both of these passages very similar is the following, in which Carlyle gives a fine specimen of his hearty, rugged, strong sense when speaking of the causes of the Revolution in France—that day of retribution—of cruel "secrets that, being taught, returned to plague the inventors:"—

"Shall we say then: Woe to Philosophism, that it destroyed Religion? Woe rather to those that

made the Holy an Abomination; woe to all men that live in such a time of world-abomination and world-destruction. Nay, answer the Courtiers, it was Turgot, it was Necker, with their mad innovating; it was the Queen's want of Etiquette; it was he, it was she, it was that. Friends, it was every scoundrel that had lived, and, quack-like, pretended to be doing, and been only eating and *mis*doing, in all provinces of life, as Shoeblack or as Sovereign Lord, each in his degree from the time of Charlemagne, and earlier. And this (for be sure no falsehood perishes, but is as seed sown out to grow) has been stirring itself for thousands of years; and now the account-day has come. And rude will the settlement be: of wrath laid up against the day of wrath."

Dr. Milman once observed, how strange that Ireland, after having produced such fine writers of English as Swift and Goldsmith, should have broken out into the peculiar style now known by the designation of "Irish." "Could Dr. Milman have forgotten that such writers as Bishop Berkeley, Burke, and Sheridan, were also Irishmen?" said Moore. Writers, it would appear, form their style far more by the eye than the ear—far more from the written than the spoken language. Witness Washington Irving, whose style is like Gold-

smith's in its purity and simplicity, though he has less of that nervous diction which gives to Goldsmith—though we mean no general comparison—one charm which was wanting to Addison, however great the beauty of his writing as it now exists. For, Addison's prose, like Wordsworth's poetry, sometimes carries simplicity to the verge of weakness.

While speaking of Goldsmith, we may observe, that there is one biography from his pen of which not one reader in a thousand has ever heard—namely, the life of Beau Nash, the once "king of Bath," and Tonbridge Wells. This life, though anonymous, is generally attributed to Goldsmith, and the style places the authorship beyond all doubt. It is well worth reading; and the wonder is that it is out of print, and the copies are only to be found on old book-stalls.

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CHAPTER VII.

HUDIBRAS, HOW WRITTEN — HOW JOHNSON AND SOUTHEY COLLECTED MATERIALS — ENGLISH OF SWIFT, DEFOE, AND COBBETT — FACILITIES PROVING HINDRANCES IN EDUCATION — OPINIONS OF DR. ARNOLD AND SYDNEY SMITH — GREAT WORKS ACCIDENTALLY SUGGESTED.

So much for the Style of great writers, and the labour with which such ease and elegance were attained. Now for the Matter of works of genius. We shall soon see that no genius can afford to dispense with the industry and the art of common mortals.

Dr. Johnson says of Butler's *Hudibras*:— 'When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, How was it performed? *Hudibras* was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments

at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Myer, of Manchester, that excellent editor of this author's relics, that he could show something like *Hudibras* in prose. He has in his possession the common-place book in which Butler deposited, not such events and precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted or meditation produced—those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. SUCH IS THE LABOUR OF THOSE WHO WRITE FOR IMMORTALITY."

The fact that Southey kept a similar common-place book, and the whole secret of its performance, and thus an insight into that life of systematic labour which really accounted for what appears the most perfect ease and natural felicity of composition—all this is disclosed to the public by four volumes lately published as Southey's *Common-place Book*.

Southey's *Doctor* is much the same kind of medley as *Tristram Shandy*, and equally impossible to produce, except after months and years of common-placing. Over this work of Southey men of

thought and reflection may spend many a pleasant hour; but Sir Bulwer Lytton's *Caxtons* is by far the happiest imitation of Sterne: and never were we more agreeably surprised than when we found, in this late publication, a wholly altered state of feeling, and a far more healthy tone of sentiment, than characterized the comparatively cold and heartless style of *Pelham*. If the author of *Pelham* could become the author of the *Caxtons*, we can almost believe that length of days might have drawn forth a *Lady of the Lake* from the author of *Don Juan*.

Doubtless, all this labour and preparation will seem the work of the fingers rather than of the head, and rather mechanical than intellectual; but, if so, we must remember that every year renders it more and more excusable for an author to avail himself of such mechanical arrangement, because the world has grown too matter-of-fact for pure poetry, or for works of wild imagination and romance. Gunpowder has blown chivalry away—the vagrant laws have no mercy on knight-errantry, substituting the round-house for the donjon's keep—the feudal baron and his vassals have made way for the board of guardians and the Union—the "splendid shilling," warm from the hand of Charity, is conjured into tickets for soup, or to

break stones; and not only so, but every surprise and trick of fortune, and all the stock subjects —the contents of the *Newgate Calendar* included, from Eugene Aram to Richard Turpin—and each variety of character, have all been drawn from almost every imaginable point of view.

Sydney Smith says, "Do we ask why we have not Molières and Shakespeares starting up at every period?—The preceding age has gleaned all the twenty or thirty characters of strong and extravagant humour which lie upon the surface of society; not because it had greater talents for humour, but merely because it was the preceding age. The blustering captain, the inebriated and witty rake, the obese alderman, the squire in London, slaving poets, homicide physicians, chambermaids, valets, and duennas, are all gone,—employed by dramatic writers who had the first of the market. These characters cannot be reintroduced on the stage—they are worn out there; but they exist in real life, and, of course, *must* exist, while men are what they ever have been."

With regard to the arts and contrivances of an author, no man was better qualified than Dr. Johnson to admit us behind the scenes—Genius, when left to its own spontaneous expression, solely dependent on its own fertility and its own free

will, whether to write or not to write, may appear to pour forth at pleasure unpremeditated effusions from the fulness and redundancy of its own exuberant stores. Thoughts long habitual become unconsciously tested and refined by the rules of a sober judgment, and, clothed, after many a trial, in appropriate words and striking illustrations; they then may be thrown off apparently without an effort, because the toil was too pleasurable to leave a trace behind.

But the case is different with task-work; and Johnson had often to write, not because he was in the humour, but because the hour of so many stipulated pages had arrived—because he felt that printers would be waiting for so many pages of manuscript, and some precise and punctual publisher would be startled out of all propriety if the stipulated papers of the *Rambler* were not forthcoming.

Accordingly, Johnson made preparation while in the humour; he sketched an essay when his thoughts happened to run on an interesting subject; and in this manner he provided a commonplace book, in which outlines and sketches of essays, with notes of topics, arguments, and illustrations, were carefully arranged. Thus it was that he ensured a full and natural flow of ideas

and words: for, the result would have been very different if all had to be forthcoming, whatever the state of his mind or humour. These outlines could at any time be enlarged and developed, and invested with all the power and fair proportions of the author's mind.

As to the course of reading conducive to a good English style, we may learn something from Lord Brougham's remarks on the studies of Robertson:—

"That Robertson had carefully studied the best writers, with a view to acquire genuine Anglicism, cannot be doubted. He was intimately acquainted with Swift's writings; indeed, he regarded Swift as eminently skilled in the narrative art. He had the same familiarity with Defoe, and had formed the same high estimation of his historical powers."

As to Robertson's appreciation of the racy English of Swift and the household words of Defoe—it is related that when a certain Professor consulted Robertson on the best discipline for acquiring a good narrative style, the remarkable advice he received was to read *Robinson Crusoe* carefully; and, when the Professor was astonished, and supposed it was a jest, the historian said he was quite serious: but, if *Robinson Crusoe* would

not help him, or if he was above studying Defoe, then he recommended *Gulliver's Travels.*

Southey specified Cobbett as one of our best writers, having a Saxon basis, derived from his education in the heart of an English county. "He is very much in earnest, and writes without stopping to pick out pretty words, or round off polished sentences."

Gibbon studied the style of Blackstone, and Pope that of Dryden, but without any trace of imitation.

Henry Taylor says that Mr. Crabbe Robinson, being one day with Schiller in his library, and observing on his shelves a collection of German translations of Shakespeare, he inquired of Schiller how it was that, understanding English as he did, he could require these translations. Schiller's answer was, that he was in the habit of reading as little as possible in foreign languages, because it was his business to write German, and he thought, by reading in other languages, he should lose his nicer perceptions of what belonged to his own.

Pope, Congreve, and Chatterton were all self-educated, being left, according to their own intellectual wants and tastes, to seek in the pure "well of English undefiled" those treasures of which they were so early possessed.

Byron, at school and college, attended far more to the living languages than to the dead.

Pope thought himself the better for having no regular education, but allowed to gather "sweets from every opening flower" in the rich fields of English literature.

Thomas Moore acquiesces in these opinions as he quotes them; he adds, that the perfect purity with which the Greeks wrote their own language was justly attributed to their entire abstinence from every other.—This assertion we quote without remark, save that Moore ventured it as an argument.

Southey says, in 1828, "Supposing my library (of 14,000 volumes) must be cut down to nineteen, it would consist of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton; Lord Clarendon, (Thomas) Jackson, Jeremy Taylor, and South; Izaac Walton, Sidney's *Arcadia*, Fuller's *Church History*, and Sir Thomas Brown." What an inexhaustible reservoir! What a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations!

Though Southey's own library numbered 14,000 volumes, many books, he thought, increased our distractions rather than our facilities. "When I was at the British Museum the other

day, I felt that to have lived in such a library would have made me positively useless, even if it had not made me mad."

In the utter impossibility of pursuing any subject through all the investigations into which it would lead him, he felt he should either lose himself in the vain pursuit, or give up in despair, and read only for the gratification of the moment.

And this observation, by Southey, leads us to observe how very erroneous is the prevalent opinion concerning the literary advantages of the rising generation. No doubt, as regards men of well-formed and mature mind, new sources of information are opened, and their various researches in science or in history may be carried to a greater extent; but as regards young gentlemen and young ladies, there appears in all this profusion of literature rather a hindrance and a diversion than anything else: they find themselves in the very perplexity of Southey in the library of the British Museum.

We could call attention to the fact that education or mental improvement means two things: first, the forming or training; and secondly, the filling of the mind.

Now the forming remains as before. Our

grandfathers and grandmothers had all the literary machinery for that in the study of languages, figures, and mathematics.

And as to the filling of the mind, a few good old books well read and digested may long take precedence of all of later years. Sydney Smith was not very old-fashioned in his ideas, and yet he wrote to his son as follows:—

"In the time you can give to English reading, you should consider what it is most needful to have and what it is most shameful to want,—shirts and stockings before frills and collars. Such is the history of your own country to be studied in Hume, Rapin, with Tindal's *Continuation;* then Cox's *Life of Sir Robert Walpole,* and the *Duke of Marlborough;* then the history of the other three or four enlightened nations of Europe. For the English poets, I will let you off at present with Milton, Dryden, Pope, and Shakespeare; and remember always, in books to keep the best company.

Luther's advice on study is well deserving the attention of all persons; namely, "to read a few select books over and over again: for, to read many sorts of books produces rather confusion than any distinct result; just as those who dwell everywhere, and remain nowhere, can have no home. As we daily avail ourselves of the society,

not of all our acquaintance, but of a few select friends, so, though we have read many books, should we make ourselves familiar with a chosen few, and have them at our fingers' ends."

This is wise counsel, indeed. A few good books, well read, will furnish ready illustrations, apt household words, and a rule and standard for our opinions and our taste. It will also add a kind of basis to our understanding, and afford a rest and refuge to our wandering thoughts.

Dr. Arnold gave excellent advice on study:—"If you read at all, read widely and comprehensively—in all cases preserve the proportions of your reading. Read along with the Fathers (for instance) the writings of men of other times, and of different powers of mind. Keep your view of men and things extensive, and, depend upon it, that a mixed knowledge is not a superficial one. He who reads deeply in one class of writers only gets views which are almost sure to be perverted, and which are not only narrow, but false. Adjust your proposed amount of reading to your time and inclination; only, let it be varied in its kind, and widely varied."

And here Dr. Arnold seems to allude to Lord Bacon's *dictum*, that "a little learning is a dangerous thing." Lord Brougham, among others, has taken

on one or two occasions much trouble to refute this proposition, so truly discouraging to men seeking knowledge "under difficulties." But the saying is true as Lord Bacon meant it. A little learning in physic caused a lady of our acquaintance, as a poor man said, to burn his inside out with paragoric. A little learning in law induces people to make a fine knot for lawyers to untie if they can. Witness the lady who wrote that she bequeathed all her "*person*al property" to her maid, Susan Smith; and consequently Susan, besides old gowns and crinoline, took 10,000*l.* in the Three per Cents, and some other "personalty" besides.

We have said enough to show that, with the products of the mind, as with the fruits of the earth, there is a very wide sphere for culture.

Sydney Smith tells us, as we have said, that even wit is to be acquired by methodical study; and surely no man had a better right to decide on such a subject. "One man is unquestionably much better calculated for it by nature than another; but association, which gradually makes a bad speaker a good one, might give a man wit who had it not, if any man chose to be so absurd as to sit down to acquire it."

The effect of wit, however, depends much on its being well-timed and suited to the humour of

those who hear it. Wit is, therefore, adapted chiefly to the social circle: we must rarely venture upon it in composition. But, very near akin to wit is apt illustration; and illustration affords the greatest relief to the reader, as a pleasing variety in the art of instruction: it may also convey the most vivid and graphic impression of which the subject can possibly admit.

Of all kinds of agreeable illustrations, popular tales and anecdotes, and even fairy legends and nursery rhymes, serve very frequently as a kind of short-hand for the more ready interchange of our thoughts and sentiments. For ready and agreeable conversation, we want not only conventional terms, but conventional illustrations. One or two "household words" touch the right chord at once, and save many a tedious sentence. Sir Walter Scott, Goldsmith, Defoe, and Cervantes, have supplied so many apt illustrations, that, without them, many a page now read with pleasure would have been turned over as abstract and unmeaning. How often does a reader feel that it is too great an effort to follow an argument, when some lively and appropriate illustration lets in a cheerful sunshine to clear the mist away!

Long arguments are carried on in our courts of law by mere reference to cases. Such magic

terms as Jones *v.* Smith—recognised by a Lord-Burleigh-like shake of the head from the Bench—often saves half-an-hour's dissertation. The same facility is derived from familiar stories in common life. Of this we have a fine illustration from Boswell.

A question was started as to how far people who disagree on some leading point can live together on friendly terms. Johnson said he could live very pleasantly with Burke, for instance, but he would not talk of the Rockingham party. "But, sir," said Goldsmith, "when people live together who have something on which they disagree, and which they want to shun, they will be in the situation mentioned in the story of *Blue Beard,—You may look into all the chambers but one.* But we should have the greatest inclination to look into that chamber, to talk of that subject."

The Doctor allowed that this was one of the happiest illustrations he had ever heard.

This anecdote will afford a key to our meaning, if we say that, among men of classical education and extensive reading, there are numerous quotations and allusions which form, in the interchange of thought, a kind of mental currency unknown to common men—the mysterious language of a privileged class to which Sir Robert Peel

beautifully applied a line of Pindar, implying that "such words had a voice for the initiated, but to others had no sound." And it was in this sense that Sir Robert said the classical reader would often trace a golden thread through every sentence of an elegant writer, invisible to all but to a classical eye.

By all these various arguments we have now adduced, supported by the opinions and authorities of men of the most surprising genius, we trust that we have shown that even the higher spheres of usefulness may possibly be reached by men of energy and perseverance, though their intellectual powers happen to fall somewhat short of Nature's highest gifts.

Sydney Smith said, "It would be an extremely profitable thing to draw up a short and well-authenticated account of the habits of study of the most celebrated writers with whose style of literary industry we happen to be most acquainted. It would go very far to destroy the absurd and pernicious association of genius and idleness, by showing men that the greatest poets, orators, statesmen, and historians — men of the most brilliant and imposing talents — have actually laboured as hard as the makers of dictionaries and the arrangers of indices; and, that the most obvious reason why they have

been superior to other men is, that they have taken more pains than other men."

"Gibbon was in his study every morning, winter and summer, at six o'clock; Burke was the most laborious and indefatigable of human beings; Leibnitz was never out of his library; Pascal killed himself by study; Cicero narrowly escaped death by the same cause; Milton was at his books with as much regularity as a merchant or an attorney — he had mastered all the knowledge of his time; so had Homer; Rafaelle lived only thirty-seven years; and in that short space of time carried the art so far beyond what it had before reached, that he appears to stand alone as a model to his successors."

"The multitude cry out 'A miracle of genius!' Yes; a man proves a Miracle of Genius, because he has been a miracle of labour; because he makes use of the accumulated wisdom of ages, and takes as his point of departure the very last line and boundary to which science has advanced; because it has ever been the object of his life to assist every intellectual gift of nature with every resource that art could suggest, and every attention diligence could bestow."

Genius is comparatively helpless and dormant without patient labour and many of the industrial

virtues of common men. But "imagination and invention," says Johnson, "are useless without knowledge; nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined." Sir Isaac Newton said, that if he excelled other men in anything, he thought it was in patient observation of facts and persevering analysis. That great philosopher attributed only to the intensity of his inspection what all others impute to the natural superiority of his vision. Buffon also thought that "Genius is Patience;" or, as another French writer explained, "*La Patience cherche, et la Génie trouve.*" And it is only when these two powers, genius and application, are found in union, that great discoveries have been made. Herschel's telescope wants Herschel's patient observation. Butler, the author of the *Analogy*, forcibly remarked—"Though a man have the best eyes in the world, he can only see the way he turns them." You must be at the pains to fix your mind's eye, however penetrating it may be. You must persevere and positively use your powers, however acute. Genius is like a great general—or like the master-mind of striking and original combinations—but without some such an aide-de-camp as Diligence or Observation to ascertain exact positions, and to supply the data

of his calculations, no result can be expected but confusion and dismay.

But to revert to the subject of these habits of study which have characterised distinguished authors—akin to this is the question as to the time which they occupied in writing.

Smollett wrote in fourteen months his *History of England*—and so entirely is this history superseded by Hume, that few persons know that Smollett ever did write a complete history of England—from the time of the Romans to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748.

Basil Hall enters into a calculation of the time required to write such a novel as one of Scott's. "Those who live with Sir Walter find him always the idlest man of the company—so we are apt to wonder at the prodigious quantity which he writes. But, in point of fact, the quantity of mere writing is not very great. Any clerk in an office would transcribe one of the *Waverley Novels* in a fortnight. I have reason to know that Sir Walter composes just as fast as he can write. He never corrects the press; or, if he does it at all, it is very slightly; and, in general, his works come before the world just as they were written. Now, such being the case, a couple of hours every day before breakfast—and Sir Walter was rarely seen till ten o'clock

— may be quite sufficient for all the MS. of *Waverley Novels* produced in the busiest year of the series."

Sir Walter thought twenty-four pages of his *Life of Napoleon* a good day's work. He says, "it comes off twangingly — so very interesting. Superficial it must be; but, better a superficial book, which brings well and strikingly together the known and acknowledged facts, than a dull, boring narrative, pausing to see farther into a millstone at every moment than the nature of the millstone admits." A most tiresome companion is a "minute philosopher, a botanist, or a pebble-gatherer, who is eternally calling your attention from the grand features of the natural picture to look at grasses and chucky-stones." We quote Sir Walter's own apology for a work which — save that it was written in an effort of manly honesty to pay the debts in which the failure of a distinguished house had involved him — has rather diminished than added to his fame.

So much for the stimulus of necessity, and of those who can say,

> "Some write for pleasure, some for spite,
> But want of money makes me write."

Besides the stimulus of necessity, one would be

curious to know how much the world owes to casual suggestions and the chance direction which has been given to the author's pen by the books he has read or the scenes he has witnessed.

Most great works probably have a tale, though oftentimes it is one long forgotten, about their casual suggestion, and the chance moment of inspiration. The following is the history of the ever-favourite *Tam O'Shanter*.

Burns was invited one evening to meet Grose, the antiquary, and a long and interesting conversation ensued about the antiquities of Scotland. Burns begged that Grose would introduce Alloway Kirk into a work then projected, and related at the same time some of Scotland's wild stories of devilry and witchcraft. Instead of this, Grose proposed that Burns should write a poem on the subject, and offered to supply an engraving of the ruin.

"*Tam O'Shanter*" was written in a single day, and took its name from the farm of Shanter, in Carrick. Campbell tells us, "Mrs. Burns relates that, observing Robert walking with long strides, and apparently muttering as he went, she let him alone for some time; at length she took the children with her and went forth to meet him; he seemed not to observe her, but continued to

walk. On this," said she, "I stepped aside with the bairns among the broom; and just as he came, with his brow flushed and his eyes shining, I heard him reciting the lines beginning—

'Now Tam! O Tam! had they been queens.'

I wish ye had but seen him!—he was in such ecstacy, that the tears were happing down his cheeks."

The poet had writing materials with him, and, leaning on a turf fence which commanded a view of the river, he committed the poem to paper, walked home, and read it in great triumph at the fireside. It came complete and perfect from his fancy at the first heat. No other work in the language contains such a wondrous variety of genius in the same number of lines.

"I seized," said the happy poet, "my gilt-headed Wangee rod in my left hand—an instrument indispensably necessary in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quicker and quicker—out skipped I among the broomy banks of the Nith to muse!"

Very similar, in some respects, is the history of Campbell's *Lochiel.* It owes its beauty and felicitous expression to the fact that the poet seized on the very moment of his inspiration—

and who is there that has not been conscious of some more than usually happy season for composition?—and sketched off the poem while the strength was given: for, Campbell had gone early to bed and fell asleep, still meditating on the *Wizard's Warning*. During the night he suddenly awoke, repeating—

"Coming events cast their shadows before!"

This was the very thought for which he had been hunting during the whole week. He rang the bell, and more than once. The servant appeared, surprised and amazed at being thus disturbed. "Sir, are you ill?" inquired the servant. "Ill! never better in my life," said the poet—one foot in the bed and one on the floor—"leave me the candle—and a cup of tea as soon as possible. It was two o'clock!—the right hour for poet's dream—and over the cup of tea he completed the first sketch of *Lochiel*.

That fine poem, *Hohenlinden*, it has often been said that we owe it to the happy chance that enabled Campbell to be an eye-witness, not of the battle of Hohenlinden itself—for that is a mistake—but we do owe it to an action of earlier date under the walls of Ratisbon, where Campbell says—"I stood with the good monks of St. James, to over-

look a charge of Klenau's cavalry upon the French under Grenier. This formed the most important epoch of my life, in point of impressions. Seeing numbers of men strewn dead on the field, or what was worse, seeing them in the act of dying; this is a picture so terrible to my memory, that I study in vain to banish it. At times, when I have been fevered and ill, I have awaked from nightmare-dreams about these dreadful images."

Scott, as he acknowledged by a presentation copy of *Waverley*, would probably never have thought of a Scotch novel, had he not read Maria Edgeworth's exquisite pieces of Irish character.

To Ricaut's *History of the Turks*, a book read with great delight in childhood, Byron ascribed his interest in the affairs of Greece, and the Oriental colouring of his poetry.

Chance—that is, in the sense in which it was defined —

"All chance direction which we cannot see,"

determined the fate of Byron in another respect.

For, had Byron not been encouraged to publish his *Childe Harold* instead of his *Art of Poetry*, Moore thinks that the rising poet might have been nipped in the bud, a victim of the Reviewers.

Mr. Lockhart remarks, that just as Cervantes

was driven from the stage by the successful dramas of Lopez de Vega, so was Scott driven from his domain of poetry by the ascendancy of Byron. But for these apparent defeats, Cervantes' genius had never been developed in *Don Quixote*, nor Scott's in the *Waverley Novels*.

The *Vicar of Wakefield*, read by Goethe in a German translation, at an early age, left an impression which gave a tone to that great poet's character for life. "The strength," we quote Mr. Foster, "which can conquer circumstances; the happy wisdom of irony, which elevates itself above every object, above fortune and misfortune, good and evil, life and death, and attains to the possession of a poetical world, first visited Goethe in the tone with which Goldsmith's tale is told. At the height of his worldly honour and success, he made his written life record what a blessing it had been to him — when standing, at the age of eighty-one, on the very brink of the grave, he told a friend that, in the decisive moment of mental development, the *Vicar of Wakefield* had formed his education; and that lately, with unabated delight, he had read the charming book again from beginning to end, not a little affected by the lively recollection how much he had been indebted to it seventy years before."

Poverty teaches a dignity of mind. It compels

men of genius to become familiar with the cottage and the garret, as well as with the palace and the mansion. The ups and downs of Oliver Goldsmith's life, from the usher at Peckham School, through the apothecary's shop, a vagabond expedition on the Continent, dramatic and literary experience—all contributed, and nearly all was indispensable, to form that most natural and most interesting tale — the *Vicar of Wakefield.*

Washington Irving, in commenting on what he calls the most beautiful of all household and family pictures, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, remarks:—

"Yet how contradictory it seems, that this, one of the most delightful pictures of home and home-felt happiness, should be drawn by a homeless man; that the most amiable picture of domestic virtue, and all the endearments of the married state, should be drawn by a bachelor, who had been severed from domestic life almost from boyhood; that one of the most tender, touching, and affecting appeals on behalf of female loveliness should have been made by a man whose deficiency in all the graces of person and manner seemed to mark him out for a cynical disparager of the sex! And yet, with all its beauties, few novels are more open to criticism, as has been ably set forth in Goldsmith's Life by Lord Macaulay. Indeed, the story

strikingly exemplified the truth laid down in its preface: 'A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity.'"

But it is not only the head, but the heart, not only the works of intellect, but of philanthropy and moral influence, in which, seemingly, the character of the great and good has been at the mercy of casual circumstances.

Thus, William Wilberforce conceived the idea of opposing the Slave Trade as a boy. He was more than fifty years actively employed from his first collecting of evidence, in 1782, to the triumphant abolition in 1833.

Fowell Buxton says, that the honest prejudice that caused his sister to forego slave-grown sugar in her tea, had the effect of calling his attention to the sufferings of the poor negro.

Warren Hastings' resolution to recover his ancestral estate of Daylesford actuated him throughout life.

The benevolent spirit of John Howard, the philanthropist, was first directed to the reform of gaols by a personal adventure seemingly of an accidental nature.

Howard was on a voyage to Portugal, at a time when Lisbon was an object of painful interest, still

smoking in ruins from the effects of the memorable earthquake, by which the finest buildings and thousands of their inhabitants had been swallowed up by the yawning earth. He had not proceeded far on his voyage when the packet in which he had embarked was captured by a French privateer. His captors used him with great cruelty; for, after keeping him for forty hours without food or water, they confined him with the rest of the prisoners in the Castle of Brest. Here they were all cast into a filthy dungeon, and there kept a considerable time longer without food; and at length a joint of mutton was thrown into the den, which the unhappy men were forced to tear in pieces and gnaw like wild beasts.

They experienced the same kind of cruel treatment for nearly a week, compelled to lie on the floor of this horrible dungeon, with nothing but straw to shelter them from its noxious and pestilential damps.

Being at length discharged, Howard, feelingly reminded of the sufferings of others, opened a correspondence with the English prisoners in other gaols and fortresses on the Continent, and found that sufferings as bad, and often worse than his own, were the common lot of the captive. Shortly after his attention was called to the state of Eng-

lish prisons, in the course of his duties as sheriff of the county of Bedford. He has remarked that the hard-hearted creditors who sometimes threatened their debtors that they should *rot in gaol* had, indeed, a very truthful significance; for that in gaol men really did *rot*—literally sinking and festering from filth and malaria. Howard estimated that, numerous as were the lives sacrificed on the gallows, quite as many fell victims to cold and damp, disease and hunger.

The last instance we shall give of a great writer, and a man of incalculable influence for good, being like "a brand snatched from the burning," and saved to enlighten and to bless the world, is John Bunyan, the son of a tinker—euphuistically called a brazier.

Bunyan, while quite an unconverted reprobate, capable even of "taking pleasure in the vileness of his companions," being a soldier in the Parliamentary army, was drawn out to go to the siege of Leicester. One of the company proposed to exchange with him; John Bunyan consented; and the substitute was shot. This, with divers other providential deliverances, was reckoned among the instances of God's goodness to call him to repentance; and, we may acknowledge, to save one of the most useful religious writers that ever lived.

There was a time when Bunyan was reproved by a poor woman as "the ungodliest fellow for swearing she had ever heard in her life; he had not known how to speak, unless he put one oath before and another behind, to make his words have authority;" but afterwards he remarked, as if it was an agreeable surprise to him, that he actually "discovered he could really speak better, and more pleasantly, without such expletives, than he had ever done before."

We are also told very gravely, that it took a long time to wean Bunyan from what he deemed the vain amusement of bell-ringing, and after that another full year to break him of dancing!

CHAPTER VIII.

ON PLAGIARISM—STERNE WITH BURTON'S "ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY"—SHERIDAN—"PIZARRO," IF ORIGINAL?—"TRISTRAM SHANDY" AND "TOM JONES" CHARACTERISED—ON SWEARING IN PRINT—SIR H. DAVY, SOUTHEY, DUKE OF WELLINGTON, HON. ROBERT BOYLE, LORD BROUGHAM, NOBLE DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH—INFIDELS BEWARE!

WHAT is the derivation of "Plagiarism?" A plagiary—and here we commit the very offence on Blackwood—"is, literally, a *cat-o'-nine-tail villain.* The word is derived from *plaga*, a stripe, part of the punishment of kidnapping, says Cicero; but, inasmuch as men do kidnap, that is, steal away and disguise the offspring of the brains, as of the bodies of men, Martial uses the same term in the modern sense of plagiarism."

But the most audacious instance of plagiarism is that committed by Sterne on Burton, the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*; the book which

Charles Lamb said should only be read in its original learned-looking folio, and which has the glory of having tempted Dr. Johnson from his bed an hour sooner than his usual time.—The peculiar audacity of Sterne consists in this: not that he hewed away, and helped himself at pleasure from the mines of literary treasures—not, secondly, that there is any harm in bringing hidden things to light, seeing that, in literature as in law, "*de non apparentibus, et de non existentibus, eadem est ratio,*" and things so old as to be forgotten have all the air of originality—nor, thirdly, that Burton's is anything else but a common-place book, and, therefore, that there is anything unfair in treating it as such; for, the plums and sweets are too thick, and this intellectual food is too indigestible in its present state, and such "portable soup" and essences have a new value and use when diluted and made palatable—but, the great offence of Sterne is, that he actually stole the very definition of stealing, and that he was a plagiarist even in his very illustration of plagiarism; for he says,—"Shall we ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?"

Now, this illustration is almost word for word from Burton!—But, having thus appeared to con-

firm the very common remark that the oddities of *Tristram Shandy* are generally stolen from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, we think it only fair to the memory of Sterne to say that, though with the writings of Sterne fresh in our memory, we once carefully read through the whole of Burton, we recognized little indeed that was borrowed, and believe that there is no just reason for charging Sterne with plagiarism.

Nay, plagiarism seems hardly plagiarism, when it is evident that the author is so capable of saying the same thing, that the slightest hint or suggestion would naturally throw his mind into the same train of thought. And this is true of Sterne. He is like the schoolboy who said, "Never mind if I do take a fancy to another's verses sometimes; everybody knows I can make the best in the school."—This was said by a now sedate and reverend Senior, who was famous in his day for making Latin verses and *catching rats* faster than any other boy in Winchester!

And Sterne seems determined to vindicate his right to borrow one of his illustrations of plagiarism, because he gives two more of his own, showing powers by no means inferior; for, he proceeds to ask:—

"Are we for ever to be twisting and untwisting

the same rope? for ever in the same track — for ever at the same pace?

"Shall we be destined, to the days of eternity, on holidays as well as working-days, to be showing the *relics of learning*, as monks do the relics of their saints, without working one, one single miracle with them?"

To draw the line where fair reading and mental culture ends and plagiarism begins is difficult, no doubt. When gipsies steal a horse, they pay the owner's good sense the compliment of cropping the mane and tail; still, this does not strengthen their legal title to an estate in horseflesh. In the present day another Virgil would be plucked bare to the last feather by all noble birds akin to the eagle of Homer. And what would become of Milton? Certainly he might plead, if we adopt the old apology for peculation, that he has fused in the alembic of his wit, and re-cast anew Homer, Virgil, Æschylus, Dante, and all that wealth of literature which any one who is not a scholar may see duly subscribed with the names of their owners in any annotated edition of the *Paradise Lost*. All this has Milton done in so masterly a way that his composition is as different almost as the Achilles in Hyde Park from the cannon of Waterloo. Still, as to the charge of plagiarism, he would at most be only

entitled to something like the verdict of—"Not Guilty, but the Court is determined to make a severe example next time the same kind of offender comes before them."

Thomas Moore, in defending Sheridan from an imputation of plagiarism in his *School for Scandal*, very sensibly vindicates the right of an author to avail himself, to some extent, of the invention of others who have gone before:—

"Mr. Sheridan, it is true, like all men of genius, had, in addition to the resources of his own wit, a quick apprehension of what suited his purpose in the wit of others, and a power of enriching whatever he adopted from them with such new grace as gave him a sort of claim of paternity over it, and made it all his own.

"Molière, when accused of borrowing, said, '*C'est mon bien, et je le reprens partout où je le trouve;*' and next, indeed, to originating—the reproduction in a new and more perfect form of materials already existing, or the full development of thoughts yet feeble and obscure in the hands of others—this is among the worthy achievements for which we look to the sons of Genius.

"Of this kind of plagiarism Mr. Sheridan was guilty, in common with the rest of his fellow-

descendants from Prometheus, who all steal the spark wherever they can find it."

This is all very generous of Thomas Moore, no doubt; still, it is a dangerous kind of law. And we may remind gentlemen of the same school of what the man says in the play:—

"No doubt great men may have the same ideas, but that can be no kind of a justification for prigging a whole act out of Shakespeare."

Byron says that Sheridan manufactured *Pizarro* from the ideas of Lewis, author of the *Monk*. Byron adds,—"I know, from having been on the Drury Lane Committee, that *Pizarro* brought more money to the theatre than any other play ever has done, or perhaps ever will do."

But we cannot dismiss Sterne without one more remark. Readers, who would judge of the imputation of plagiarism, must be referred to the two small volumes by Dr. Ferriar, who attacked Sterne like a Detective Policeman, examined all his literary goods and chattels, and left nothing unobserved that could possibly be identified. But what if he did trace some quaint ideas to Burton, Bishop Hall, and other authors, English and foreign? the question is, How many were these in comparison to the rest unclaimed, and were

they by any means the best things in Sterne's book?

But it is more important—a positive duty—not to dismiss the subject of Sterne's writings, without observing that we fully agree that "the idea of genius should always be associated in our minds with moral grandeur." Witness the Duke of Wellington at morning prayers; and compare this picture with that of a Lord Chancellor of thirty years since reading letters and papers during divine service in the House of Lords!—And since wit and humour has its use, it is sad, indeed, to find that a great man cannot, like Sydney Smith, be both witty and wise. Sterne, unhappily, exemplified the respect in which the notable position of Edmund Burke, so true as he meant it, has been properly considered false; namely, that "Vice loses half its evil when it loses all its grossness."

The lovers of Sterne will remark that he is never indecent in expression. Morality gains little by this; for, the insidious and the suggestive is the most dangerous style that impurity can assume. This fault is deeply to be regretted; for, the pages of Sterne are so well fitted to encourage kindness and consideration in little things—a genial, generous tone of feeling, and that rare, most rare kind of sympathy—that balm of tenderness and pity—

that winning courtesy, which few other books are found to promote—though, at the same time, these kindly feelings do more for our daily happiness in this world, so chequered with weal and woe, than many of the greater and more heroic virtues.

There was an instructive lesson and a striking evidence of the lively sense that one man of genius at least entertained of his responsibilities, in the following letter:—

Charles Lamb thus reproves Coleridge:—"I grieve from my very soul to observe you in your plans of life, veering about from this hope to the other, and settling nowhere. Is it an untoward fatality (speaking humanly) that does this for you—a stubborn, irresistible current of events? or lies the fault, as I fear it does, in your own mind? You seem to be taking up splendid schemes of the future only to lay them down again; and your futures are an *ignis fatuus*, that has been conducting you, in thought, from Lancaster Court, Strand, to somewhere near Matlock; then jumping across to Dr. Somebody's, whose son's tutor you were likely to be.—Would that the dancing demon may conduct you at last, in peace and comfort (even), to the 'life and labours of a cottager!'"

Much allowance must be made for the taste of

the age in which Sterne wrote. *Pamela*, published in 1840, was thought so pure as to be even recommended from the pulpit; yet it contained passages which would be thought highly indelicate in these days. This difference of taste will explain Fielding's statement in the Preface of *Tom Jones*, that it contains "nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nothing that can offend the chastest eye in the perusal."

Dr. Johnson says, as to the evil influence of such works, "Men will not become highwaymen because Macheath is acquitted on the stage;" nor, says Sir Walter Scott, "will they become swindlers and thieves, because they sympathise with the fortunes of *Gil Blas*, or licentious debauchees because they read *Tom Jones*."

Certainly, such pictures of men of loose principles and morals may not be actually incentives to vice; still they, more or less, familiarise the mind with matters on which it is no wholesome exercise to meditate. Though it is only fair to say, that few persons will rise from the perusal of *Tom Jones* without feeling confirmed in a preference of manly dealing and fair play, as also in a detestation of mean and little ways.

The publication of an immoral book is one of the worst offences which can be committed against

the well-being of society. It is a sin, to the consequences of which no limits can be assigned; and these consequences no after-repentance in the author can counteract. Remorse of conscience will be of no avail. The poignancy of a death-bed repentance cannot cancel one copy of the thousands which are sent abroad; and as long as it continues to be read, the author is the pander of posterity, and so long is he heaping up guilt upon his soul in perpetual accumulation.

Swearing in print is also most revolting! What is there to recommend swearing? "Literally, nothing but the sin of it," said the present Bishop of Lincoln: "therefore, swearing is pre-eminently devilish." Byron's letters are revolting from that circumstance, and if some half-a-dozen notes in Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors* were erased, it would remove blots strangely out of tone and keeping with the greatness of the work; and this, even, although the language of Thurlow remained true to the man.—At all events, an author who quotes that which is vicious should beware of identifying himself by any expression of sympathy with the language he repeats.

Would that this observation would sink deeply into the minds of all those who undertake that serious responsibility which the powers of the press

afford! What father would like to see his child spelling out a profane word as a volume lies open on the table? Would he not be sorry to see his son, a mere schoolboy—so apt to conclude that swearing is manly—rooting this vice in his soul by the example of some man of genius? We hope to see the day when no respectable printer will allow (except in evidence) a profane word to issue from his press. Byron's distempered and unwholesome trash, written forty years ago, may poison our children, and unsettle their minds now and for years to come.

So much have they to answer for who thus embody sin and embalm it for posterity. Happy the man of genius who has never cause to grieve in his later years—as one of our most brilliant poets did grieve—over the broad-cast immorality of his youth!

Wilberforce, in praising the *Heart of Midlothian*, remarked that Jeanie Deans was a truly Christian character, and beautiful as far as it goes. He then makes a complaint in which, we confess, we do not sympathise; "that such fascinating volumes should have so little moral or religious object—they remind me of a giant spending his strength in cracking nuts." And then he says he would sooner be the author of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*,

as regards satisfaction at his last hour, than the author of all the *Waverley Novels*.

Surely both are good in their way; and numbers humanised by the one might never read the other. Sir Walter Scott turned the talent committed to him to the best account. The cause of religion requires labourers of more kinds than one. Such writers as Sir W. Scott may smooth the paths of rectitude, and entice the sheep into the fold; such writers as Legh Richmond and Hannah More may feed them afterwards. As to the *Waverley Novels* "having no moral object," they have decidedly a moral influence; and nothing makes a tale so unpalatable as when we detect that the tale is the mere vehicle of some serious piece of advice.—Even full-grown children like a story-book, and not a mere lesson in disguise.

"I envy," said Sir H. Davy, "no quality of the mind or intellect in others; be it genius, power, wit, or fancy: but I should prefer a firm religious faith to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes, when all earthly hopes vanish; and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights; awakens life even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument of torture and

of shame the ladder of ascent to paradise; and, far above all combinations of earthly hopes, calls up the most delightful visions of palms and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, the security of everlasting joys, where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation, and despair."

It is admitted that painters would be greatly at a loss for subjects were it not for those furnished by our common religion. Few pictures can tell the whole story. The painter generally presumes knowledge in the spectator, and leaves much for that knowledge to fill up. It is, further, among the secondary advantages of religion that it fires the enthusiasm and kindles the imagination of the artist; it also establishes a common feeling and common interest as it were, a chord to vibrate in sympathy from the heart of the speaker to the heart of the hearer; and this is true with more kinds of speaking than one—true whether the Sculptor finds expression in forms, the Painter in colours, or the Orator in words.

On this subject Sir Samuel Romilly has made an interesting observation. He was alluding to Swift's strange work, *An Argument against abolishing Christianity*. We will waste no observation on the title, though one might as well indite

An Argument against abolishing the Sun. Doubtless, Bishop Watson's famous *Apology for the Bible* sounds quite as derogatory to the many, who, like George III. (ignorant of the *Apologia* of Justin Martyr), would say "that they did not know before that the Bible needed any apology!"—On Swift's argument Romilly remarked, that the secondary advantages of Christianity might be the subject of an instructive essay. "For," said he, "when I was in Paris everything I saw convinced me that, independently of our future happiness and our sublimest enjoyments in this life, religion is necessary to the comforts, the conveniences, and even to the elegances and lesser pleasures of life. Not only I never met with a writer truly eloquent who did not, at least, affect to believe in religion, but I never met with one in whom religion was not the richest source of his eloquence."

Southey desired his daughter to read her Bible by Morning and Evening Lessons and Psalms, in the order of the Church. "In the course of this easy and regular perusal, the system of religion appears more and more clear and coherent, its truths are felt more intimately, and reach the heart, as slow showers penetrate the ground."

Thomas Jackson's works, though little known, Southey thought among the most valuable of

all our English divines: there is a late edition from the Clarendon Press.

Bacon, Locke, Newton, and Boyle are the names on whom the believer rests his cause. Add Sir H. Davy, who said, "Reason is often a dead weight in life, destroying feeling, and substituting for principle, calculation and caution." A man's real "intellectual superiority" he considered to depend upon his spiritual nature, and held that the results of reason were not capable of being compared with those of faith.

As to the Honourable Robert Boyle, he "had so great a reverence for the Deity, that the very name of God was never mentioned by him without a pause." In his treatise of *Seraphic Love, or some Motives to the Love of God,*" he shows how God is the fittest object of our love, and then he says He hath prepared for them that love Him "an ocean of felicity, so shoreless and so bottomless, that all the saints and angels cannot exhaust it."

About Infidelity, or Scepticism, we have one word to say to any thoughtless youth:—"Others, young man, have doubted before you, and, knowing all the arguments that you know, have lived to scatter those follies to the winds—to believe, and to repent. So we would bid you, at all

events, to beware of making up your mind that, if an unbeliever now, you will be always an unbeliever. There is by nature greater tendency to devotion and belief in some men than in others, and a greater tendency even in the same men under the different influences of mature years and altered fortune. As some men have more taste for the harmony of musical sounds and poetical associations, so some have more yearning for an object of their veneration, as also of their gratitude for daily blessings. 'These things,' says the Apostle, 'are spiritually discerned;' and that spiritual discernment which the young man wants to-day he may know to-morrow, if he does not feel bound, as if from consistency, to close his heart against it.

Lord Brougham remarked that no man knew more of scientific truth than Newton, of intellectual truth than Locke and Pascal, of physical truth than Sir H. Davy, nor of legal evidence than Sir M. Hale, and yet all of these were firm believers in Revelation.

Southey says, "Where religious principles have not been inculcated in childhood, Infidelity seems almost necessarily one step in the progress of an active mind." This had been the case in the circle of his experience. "I have mixed with men of all descriptions — Atheists, Roman Catholics,

and Dissenters of every kind; from the Unitarians, whose faith stands below zero, to the disciples of Joanna Southcote, whose trash would raise the thermometer to the point of fever heat—and now, when I call to mind those persons who were unbelievers some thirty years ago, I find that the greater, and all the better part, are settled in conformity with the belief of the National Church."

Adverting to Sir Walter, we hold that the soldiers of the Cross, like other soldiers, want pioneers to make smooth the way; and the greatest of such pioneers was Sir Walter Scott. He made truth and goodness so winning and so attractive.

Judged by his works, Sir Walter Scott was "the first gentleman in Europe."

CHAPTER IX.

PUBLIC SPEAKING LEARNT BY PRACTICE—SYDNEY SMITH'S OPINION—CHALMERS, SIR J. REYNOLDS, SHERIDAN; LORDS MANSFIELD, ERSKINE, BROUGHAM, CAMPBELL; PITT, ROMILLY, SIR R. PEEL—M. BAUTAIN'S ADVICE.

Lord Macaulay said, that as in the civil service of India many a man, from constant practice, writes above his abilities, so in England, many a man speaks above his abilities, out of proportion with any other test of his natural powers. Neither is there anything in which a man in private life—as he listens to the speakers in the Courts of Westminster or the House of Commons—is so likely to underrate his own powers of acquisition as in public speaking. For, without denying the fact that "a man is not made, but born, a truly great orator," we may confidently assert, there is no accomplishment in which more can be done with study and practice, or less without.

For first—as to the matter of a speech—study

will furnish you with nearly every argument that can be used, and enable you to anticipate—like the Grecian general who was always thinking, What should I do if hampered in this defile, or in that?—every attack of your adversary.

Secondly—as to language—most men are fluent the second time they tell the same story; and it is wonderful how naturally words once pressed into your service will start forward to fill the gaps in your sentences at a second attempt.

Thirdly—as to memory and readiness in debate, as also in sustaining power—a man can no more expect to speak for an hour, than to run for an hour, without practice to enable him to gain strength by degrees.

Fourthly—as to nervousness—it is remarkable how much of that will go off when accustomed to your audience. Most speakers feel a little nervous in a wholly new position; indeed, so much is there in being accustomed to your audience, that Lord Eldon once remarked that he was always a little nervous in speaking at the Goldsmiths' dinner, though he could "talk before a Parliament with as much indifference as if there were so many cabbage-plants."

But it is chiefly in our third point—in not allowing for the effect of habit and the slow but

certain proficiency attainable by practice — that men are discouraged from attempting public speaking. A compositor in the Clarendon, while picking up and distributing his type, one day in our presence, heard a lady remark on the wonderful rapidity with which his hand and mind seemed to act together. "There was a thought between every movement at first, madam," was his reply; "and, after all, as you play on the piano, the rapidity of your fingers, in obedience to the mind, is far greater than any printer's." Now, the habit of selecting and distributing the right words, like the right type, in the right places, is an operation of the same kind on the part of the orator, and one equally within the sphere of practice to improve.

And, therefore, Sir Joshua Reynolds truly said, "They who have never observed the gradation by which art is acquired, who see only what is the full result of long labour and application of an infinite variety of acts, are apt to conclude that it is not only inaccessible to themselves, but the gift of nature."

He then gives this beautiful illustration:—

"The travellers into the East tell us, that when the ignorant inhabitants of these countries are asked concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining amongst them, the melancholy monu-

ments of their former grandeur and long-lost science, they always answer that they were built by magicians. The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art, which it is utterly unable to fathom; and it supposes that such a void can only be passed by supernatural powers."

Almost all great men have been as anxious as Sir Joshua not to stand at an inapproachable distance from their fellows. Sydney Smith, in his *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, insisted that even in that Wit in which he shone, a great deal was to be done by practice and perseverance, and said very humorously, that a man might sit down five or six hours a-day to study wit with as much improvement as in many other kinds of accomplishment; and, if he began about midsummer, he probably might produce a decided effect against Christmas. On the subject of Oratory, he must now speak for himself:—

"Imagination is capable of great improvement from habit. It depends greatly on association, and association increases by habit. We increase in our power and facility of associating and combining things old, and, consequently, in imagining or inventing new things out of these old materials." Sydney Smith, in another place, remarks:—"What

an enormous power of versification must Pope have gained after his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey!* No combination of words or inflection of sounds could possibly have been new to him, and he must have almost meditated in hexameters, and conversed in rhyme." "What a powerful human being must that man become who, beginning with original talents, has been accustomed, for half his life, to the eloquence of the bar or the senate! No combination of circumstances can come before him for which he is unprepared; he is always ready for every purpose of defence and attack, and trusts, with the most implicit confidence, to that host of words and images which he knows from long experience will rise up at any moment of exigence for his ornament and support."

The same great authority on the powers of the human mind says, "Whence the effusions of eloquence every day to be witnessed in the senate, but by that intrepidity, self-possession, and command of words and images, which habit alone can confer? Fresh, youthful, untaught nature can *never* do such things as these."

But as to Imagination—the subject which gave occasion to these remarks—there is such a thing as a "fatal facility of speech." An orator may be troubled, even to a morbid extent, not only with a

too great determination of words to his mouth, but too eager a rush of topics and ideas to his mind. Dr. Chalmers's thoughts positively crowded and jostled each other so as to be a bar to clear and lucid exposition; and this it was which prevented him from doing full justice to his powers extempore.

The fact that a man may speak the better even for the paucity of his ideas was well illustrated by Swift, when he said that the congregation issue faster from a thin church than from a crowded one.

So Romilly said of Edmund Burke: "Certainly never had any writer a more luxuriant imagination than Burke—he is more a poet than an orator; but he indulges that poetical imagination to a fault. When he has once hold of a beautiful image, he forgets that its only use is to illustrate; the ornament becomes with him the subject, and he employs many phrases to decorate and enrich the figure, while the matter of his speech is quite neglected."

Presuming, therefore, that all persons will be disposed to believe that, in oratory as in other efforts of the human mind, practice and proficiency go together, we will now give a few remarkable anecdotes to illustrate the labour and study, and

the peculiar kind of training, to which our most effective speakers have submitted.

Thomas Moore tells us that "one striking characteristic of Sheridan, as a writer and an orator, was the great degree of labour and preparation which his productions in both lines cost him.

The papers left by Sheridan have given us a clear insight into his manner of producing his great works, from which we shall see that the mechanism of these works is the next most interesting thing to the works themselves. Sheridan never made a speech of any moment of which the sketch, more or less detailed, has not been found among his papers, with the more showy passages generally written two or three times over, and often upon detached pieces of paper or on cards. "To such minutiæ of effect did Sheridan attend, that I have found," says Moore, "in more than one instance, a memorandum made of the precise place in which the words, 'Mr. Speaker,' were to be introduced.

Such preparatory sketches are continued down to the latest of his displays; and it is observable that when, from the increased derangement of his affairs, he had no longer leisure or collectedness enough to prepare, he ceased to speak. The only time he could have found for this pre-arrangement of his thoughts must have been during the many hours

of the day that he remained in bed, when frequently, while the world gave him credit for being asleep, he was employed in laying the framework of his wit and eloquence for the evening."

Moore further tells us, that Sheridan began by using for this purpose the same sort of copybooks which he had employed in the first rough draughts of his plays.

However much we may admire industry in combination with talent, it must be admitted that the association of a brilliant speech with a copybook would have tended rather to break the spell by which Sheridan enchanted his admiring audience.

But we can hardly excuse Moore for revealing so many of the secrets of his friend. A biographer should have some of the sensibility of a gallant executor to a deceased beauty, who is always allowed to keep the rouge, the false curls and padding, out of the schedule of the estate.

Many readers may not be aware of what has often been related in the case of Sheridan, that there was a time when nature appeared to have left too much for art to do. It has been often mentioned that Sheridan, after his maiden speech—a speech made on the occasion of a petition alleging his own undue return for Stafford, in

the year 1780—asked Woodfall, the celebrated reporter, what he thought of it. The answer was, "I am sorry to say, I do not think this is your line—you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits." On hearing which, Sheridan rested his head upon his hand for a few minutes, and then vehemently exclaimed, "It is in me, however, and—it *shall* come out."

By the practice of Sheridan, we are reminded of the ways and means adopted by another great man, of a wayward disposition somewhat similar, namely, Lord Erskine.

Lord Erskine laboriously and systematically studied English literature. He delighted in Milton, and, says Lord Brougham, "the noble speeches in *Paradise Lost* may be deemed as good a substitute as could be discovered by the future orator for the immortal originals in the Greek models." Erskine was so familiar with Shakespeare that he could almost, like Porson, have held conversation in the phrases of this great dramatist. Dryden and Pope he not only perused and reperused, but got almost entirely by heart. Thus was the oratory of Erskine perfected by study, however much it was prompted and fired by nature too. "His acquaintance with the Latin poets," says Lord Campbell, "though not very great, and his intense and unremitting

study of the best English writers, both in prose and verse, had supplied him with a correct, chaste, forcible, and musical diction, in which to express his thoughts."

Lord Campbell coincides with the advice given by Lord Brougham to the students at Glasgow, that careful and accurate writing is a necessary preparation for good speaking. The art of composition is the same, whether the tongue or the pen afford the means of expression, and "sentences should be formed, slowly and carefully, on paper," said Lord Campbell, "before we trust ourselves to form them under the excitement and the urgency of a public speech."

Lord Mansfield devoted himself to oratory at college; and most valuable is the testimony borne by Lord Campbell, in his *Lives of the Chancellors*, to the fact that oratorical skill is not merely a gift of nature, but depends greatly on study and careful practice. Mansfield read systematically all that had been written on public speaking, and made himself familiar with all the ancient orators. Cicero was his chief favourite, and he used to declare that he had translated and retranslated every single extant oration. He likewise diligently practised original composition, both in Latin and English; "knowing," says Lord Campbell, "that there is no

other method by which correctness and condensation in extempore speaking can be acquired."

William Pitt, from an early age, adopted an invaluable exercise for a public speaker. If the practice of making written translations be improving to one who would compose well, *vivâ voce* translation must be an equally useful preparation for composition in debate. Pitt practised translation in its most genuine form—not mere literal and grammatical construing, but reading Greek and Latin authors, many pages at a time, into his best and most idiomatic English.

Bishop Tomline was Pitt's tutor: and he informs us, that so wonderful was Pitt's proficiency, that when he first entered the University, though little more than fourteen years of age, he could read into English six or seven pages of Thucydides, which he had not previously seen, without more than two or three mistakes. Tomline very truly says, "Such proficiency was, probably, greater than ever was acquired by any other person in such early youth." So much greater, indeed, we will venture to say, that, unless rather fortunate in the pages which first opened, we doubt whether there has ever been an undergraduate in either University whose readiness at translating Thucydides at sight is equal to what the bishop's words literally imply. But since

it is also affirmed that Pitt, while at college, translated the *Cassandra* of Lycophron at sight, we must cease to judge of him by any common standard. However, suffice it to observe, that the practice of translating was one part of Pitt's training for public speaking.

As another preparation, Pitt, before he had a seat in Parliament, was constantly in the gallery of the Commons, and often near the throne in the Lords. And, whenever he heard a fine speech which happened to contend against his own opinions, he accustomed himself to consider of what reply that speech admitted: and when the next speaker accorded with his own sentiments, he then observed his mode of arranging and enforcing his ideas, and considered whether any argument could have been added, or whether any position could have been more forcibly maintained.

Pitt had also some practice in speaking on the Western Circuit, and once drew forth the applauses of the Court, and a high compliment from Lord Mansfield in the King's Bench, in support of a motion for a writ of habeas corpus, to bring up, to be bailed, a man who was charged with murder.

The testimony borne by Sir Samuel Romilly to the labour of acquiring oratorical proficiency is of the same kind:—

"Above all," he says, in a letter now extant, "I was anxious to acquire a great facility of elocution, which I thought indispensably necessary to my success. Instead, however, of resorting to any of those debating societies, which were at that time much frequented, I adopted a very useful expedient, which I found suggested in Quintilian—that of expressing myself in the best language I could, whatever I had been reading; in using the arguments I had met with in Tacitus or Livy, and making with them speeches of my own, not uttered, but composed, and existing only in thought. Occasionally, too, I attended the two Houses of Parliament, and used myself to recite in thought, or to answer, the speeches I had heard there."

At the same time that Sir Samuel Romilly made this confession, he also told us how *not to do it:* instancing one of the lamest arguments ever heard in the House. He says "that an Alderman of the City of London, to maintain that the continuance of slavery was consistent with the honour of this country, against Wilberforce's noble defence of the African, actually told the House that slavery afforded a market for the refuse fish and corrupted food, which could be sold for no other description of persons."

Lord Campbell also tells us how *not* to do it,

by the following instance of the oratorical figure (so called by some) Bathos:—He said he himself heard a Judge at Stafford thus sentence a prisoner to death for forgery: "And I trust, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Redeemer, you may experience that mercy in another world, which *a due regard to the credit of the paper currency of the country forbids you to hope for here!*"

"With Edmund Burke," says Dr. Croly, "Milton's richness of language, boundless learning, and scriptural grandeur of conception, were the first and last themes of his applause. Young's *Night Thoughts* also was a favourite in his day, and Burke committed a large portion of that poem to memory. He used to make written translations of the Latin poets, and to practise himself with original poetry."

Lord Brougham is only one of many orators who has told us that good writing is an indispensable preparation for good speaking. And very naturally so, because the first thing in speaking is, not only to have something to say, but also to know definitely what you are going to say. And words are the only certain test of thought; so much so, that we often stop short in the midst of any assertion or any request, struck by the form which it assumes in words. Shakespeare makes King John say to Hubert, who pleaded his sovereign's

order for putting the young prince to death, that if, instead of understanding him by signs,

> " *Thou*
> Hadst bid me tell my tale in express words,
> Deep shame had struck me dumb;"

for, words make man start at his own thoughts.

And this is one of many ways in which words are not only the vehicle, but the very mirror, in which we see our own ideas, and, as it were, behold the deformity of our minds.

Of Sir Robert Peel, it is well known that his father from an early age did all he could to prepare him for Parliamentary life. The story that every Sunday after dinner he made his son preach the vicar's sermon over again from the dining-table as his pulpit, Sir Lawrence Peel takes some pains to assure us is not true: still, he says, it is true that the father accustomed his son to repeat to him alone in his study all that he could remember of the sermon, and occasionally a guest or some intimate friend was permitted to be present.

This practice of Sir Robert's father is rather quoted as a testimony to the necessity of practice for an orator than as a hint to other parents to do the same. Childhood is the season rather for collecting ideas than for expressing them; and with oratory, as with other productions of human

labour, it has been observed that your crop may be early without being the richer for the forcing — that the statesman would ill exchange the habit of silent and patient thought for the more ready utterance of youthful ideas; also, that a formality of manner, "a fatal facility of speech," and a certain stereotyped and level style, is too apt to be learnt, to the sacrifice of all originality and effective diction.

The speaker, like the musician, requires first of all a perfect mastery of his instrument — a full command of all the powers of language. M. Bautain says, "As the violinist commands with the touch every part of the string, his fingers alighting on the exact point to produce the sound, so the mind of the speaker should be able to alight on the words just suitable to each part of the thought, and readily mould them in such sentences as the subject may require."

And how shall the orator be trained to choose *the* word — the very word — in unison with each shade of thought or tone of feeling? How shall his mind be fitted up and furnished with forms of sentences, as it were — the moulds in which to cast them? The answer is, that the best of all preparation is that of our old classical schools; for there we are trained first of all,

by reading the Latin or the Greek, to ascertain the author's thought, as the idea to be expressed, and then we have to select the precise words to express it, embodying the idea of two thousand years since in the language of to-day. "A youth," says Bautain, "is thus taught to learn the connexion of ideas by the relation of words which he is continually fashioning and refashioning; and while learning to form sentences, great indeed is the facility the mind acquires by this perpetual comparison of different idioms."

The ancient languages differ so widely from the English, that great ingenuity is required to find adequate expressions. The phrases of the two languages are measured and weighed incessantly; they are compared each with each, and each with the idea, to ascertain which phrase will render it best.

And is it no advantage to the mind to hold daily converse with the noble ideas and the chaste diction of men of genius? How improving is such an intimacy of mind with mind and heart with heart! How great the intellectual gain of such familiarity! What a pleasure to have found an equivalent term, and to have uttered it with the same vigour or the same delicacy, in our language, as the author first expressed it in a language widely different! Why,

it is like playing the same tune on another instrument; it is like building the same grand edifice, making up by our ingenuity for the deficiency of our materials. What profit in this collision of idioms, from which the spark of ideas is often struck forth! And, finally, what facility of expression, what readiness for extemporaneous speaking, must not accrue from this habit, contracted from childhood, of handling and turning a sentence in every direction, until the most perfect form be found, not only for the expression most touching to the mind, but also for the harmony and rhythm most grateful to the ear!

"But there is also another practice," said M. Bautain, "which wonderfully assists the speaker in this choice of words and forms of sentences; we mean learning by heart the finest passages of great writers, and especially all the most musical parts, so as to be able to recite them as language that occurs quite naturally, without the effort of a thought, in a solitary walk.

At an early age, this practice of recitation is so easy and agreeable, that he who aspires to the art of speaking ought never to neglect it. For, besides furnishing the mind with fine thoughts, well expressed and linked together, it also fills the understanding with graceful images; it forms the

ear to rhythm, and imparts a sense of the harmony of speech; for, speech is not without a kind of harmony and music of its own. "By reading the beautiful lines of Corneille and Racine, or Bossuet's majestic and pregnant sentences, or the harmonious and cadenced compositions of Fénélon and Massillon, we gradually acquire a language approaching theirs, and imitate them instinctively—so natural is the attraction of the beautiful, and so strong our propensity to reproduce whatever pleases. By repeating this exercise daily for years, we shall attain a refined taste of the delicacies of language and the shades of style, just as the eye long accustomed to fine forms can no longer endure grotesque and unmeaning edifices."

From the same exercise of committing fine passages to memory, arises a power of shaping sentences, which I can only liken to a mould into which the stream of thought, flowing full of life and ardour, becomes fixed in fair proportion. In this way the oratorical diction must be cast at once, in order that our sentences may exhibit a beautiful and a living unity. Indeed, for a series of lucid and perspicuous sentences, a beautiful mould is indispensable, and the young orator can hardly hope that his mind shall be provided with such ready forms, except by studying and com-

mitting to memory the very words and sentences of the greatest masters of the art.

All orators admit that the habit of hearing good speakers contributed, by unconscious imitation, greatly to their proficiency. Books of instruction are good in their way, but a great example and an able teacher is of the nature of a living book, adding power to his precepts, and imparting energy at the same moment as instruction. It is one torch kindling another. "And," says M. Bautain, "having myself for four years profited daily by the lessons and speaking of M. Villemain at the Lyceum of Charlemagne, if I know anything of the art of speaking and writing, I say it before the world, that to him, after Providence, I owe it all."

M. Bautain, whose *Hints for the Pulpit, the Senate, and the Bar*, are truly valuable, now translated into English, was Vicar-General and Professor at the Sorbonne.

CHAPTER X.

BROUGHAM'S LETTER TO MACAULAY — TRISTRAM SHANDY ON USEFUL KNOWLEDGE — GRATTAN, CURRAN, LORDS LANSDOWNE AND ERSKINE — AFTER-DINNER SPEECHES FAILURES — CIBBER AND GARRICK — WISDOM OF BRITISH JURIES.

As to living instructors, and learning by example and imitation, Sir Robert Peel, after the example of William Pitt, used at an early age to be taken by his father to the House of Commons when some great debate was expected, and that at a time when Pitt might have been heard with his cautious and lucid opening speech, and Fox with his fervid and impetuous reply. And when at length he had become a member of the House, Sir Robert devoted one whole year to listen and to observe. And that most wisely: for, a speech is effective only in proportion as it is in unison with the audience. The speaker must "study the people"—must learn the tone and temper of the House—and when these and all other intellectual

qualifications are not wanting, the mere power of speaking and finding words to do justice to your own conceptions, whether at the bar or the senate, is comparatively easy.

And this may, perhaps, be a proper place to introduce the following copy of a well-known letter of Lord Brougham, first printed by Professor Selwyn, —a letter of advice too valuable to be lost, although many persons have sought in vain for a copy:—

"To Zachary Macaulay, Esq.

"*Newcastle, March* 10, 1823.

"My dear Friend,

"My principal object in writing to you to-day, is to offer you some suggestions, in consequence of some conversation I have just had with Lord Grey, who has spoken of your son (at Cambridge) in terms of the greatest praise. He takes his account from his son; but from all I know, and have learnt in other quarters, I doubt not that his judgment is well formed. Now you, of course, destine him for the bar, and, assuming that this, and the public objects incidental to it, are in his views, I would fain impress upon you (and, through you, upon him) a truth or two which experience has made me aware of, and which I would have given a great deal to have been acquainted with earlier in life from the experience of others. First, that the foundation of all excellence is to be laid in early application to general knowledge is clear; that he is already aware of; and equally so it is (of which he may not be so well aware) that professional eminence can only be attained by entering betimes into the lowest drudgery, the most

repulsive labours of the profession: even a year in an attorney's office, as the law is now practised, I should not hold too severe a task, or too high a price to pay, for the benefit it must surely lead to; but, at all events, the life of a special pleader, I am quite convinced, is the thing before being called to the bar. A young man whose mind has once been well imbued with general learning, and has acquired classical propensities, will never sink into a mere drudge. He will always save himself harmless from the dull atmosphere he must live and work in, and the sooner he will emerge from it and arrive at eminence. But what I wish to inculcate especially, with a view to the great talent for public speaking which your son happily possesses, is, that he should cultivate that talent in the only way in which it can reach the height of the art, and I wish to turn his attention to two points. I speak on this subject with the authority both of experience and observation. I have made it very much my study in theory; have written a great deal upon it, which may never see the light, and something which has been published; have meditated much and conversed much on it with famous men; have had some little practical experience in it, but have prepared for much more than I ever tried, by a variety of laborious methods, reading, writing, much translation, composing in foreign languages, &c.; and I have lived in times when there were great orators among us; therefore I reckon my opinion worth listening to, and the rather, because I have the utmost confidence in it myself, and should have saved a world of trouble and much time had I started with a conviction of its truth.

"1. The first point is this:—the beginning of the art is to acquire a habit of easy speaking; and, in whatever

way this can be had (which individual inclination or accident will generally direct, and may safely be allowed to do so) it must be had. Now, I differ from all other doctors of rhetoric in this,—I say, let him first of all learn to speak easily and fluently, as well and sensibly as he can, no doubt; but, at any rate, let him learn to speak. This is to eloquence, or good public speaking, what the being able to talk in a child is to correct grammatical speech. It is the requisite foundation, and on it you must build. Moreover, it can only be acquired young; therefore let it by all means, and at any sacrifice, be gotten hold of forthwith. But in acquiring it every sort of slovenly error will also be acquired. It must be got by a habit of easy writing (which, as Wyndham said, proved hard reading); by a custom of talking much in company; by speaking in debating societies, with little attention to rule, and mere love of saying something at any rate, than of saying anything well. I can even suppose that more attention is paid to the matter in such discussions than in the manner of saying it; yet still to say it easily, *ad libitum*, to be able to say what you choose, and what you have to say,—this is the first requisite, to acquire which everything else must for the present be sacrificed.

"2. The next step is the grand one—to convert this style of easy speaking into chaste eloquence. And here there is but one rule. I do earnestly entreat your son to set daily and nightly before him the Greek models. First of all, he may look to the best modern speeches (as he probably has already); Burke's best compositions, as *The Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents;* speech 'On the American Conciliation,' and 'On the Nabob of Arcot's Debt;' Fox's 'Speech on the West-

minster Scrutiny' (the first part of which he should pore over till he has it by heart); 'On the Russian Armament,' and 'On the War,' 1803, with one or two of Wyndham's best, and very few, or rather none, of Sheridan's; but he must by no means stop here. If he would be a great orator, he must go at once to the fountain head, and be familiar with every one of the great orations of Demosthenes. I take for granted that he knows those of Cicero by heart; they are very beautiful, but not very useful, except, perhaps, the *Milo pro Ligario*, and one or two more; but the Greek must positively be the model; and merely reading it, as boys do, to know the language, won't do at all; he must enter into the spirit of each speech, thoroughly know the positions of the parties, follow each turn of the argument, and make the absolutely perfect and most chaste and severe composition familiar to his mind. His taste will improve every time he reads and repeats to himself (for he should have the fine passages by heart), and he will learn how much may be done by a skilful use of a few words, and a rigorous rejection of all superfluities. In this view I hold a familiar knowledge of Dante to be next to Demosthenes. It is in vain to say that imitations of these models won't do for our times. First, I do not counsel any imitation, but only an imbibing of the same spirit: Secondly, I know from experience that nothing is half so successful in these times (bad though they be) as what has been formed on the Greek models. I use a very poor instance in giving my own experience, but I do assure you that both in courts of law and parliament, and even to mobs, I have never made so much play (to use a very modern phrase) as when I was almost translating from the Greek. I composed the peroration of my

speech for the Queen, in the Lords, after reading and repeating Demosthenes for three or four weeks, and I composed it twenty times over at least, and it certainly succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, and far above any merits of its own. This leads me to remark, that though speaking, with writing beforehand, is very well until the habit of easy speech is acquired, yet after that he can never write too much—this is quite clear. It is laborious, no doubt, and it is more difficult beyond comparison than speaking off hand; but it is necessary to perfect oratory, and, at any rate, it is necessary to acquire the habit of correct diction. But I go further, and say, even to the end of a man's life, he must prepare, word for word, most of his finer passages. Now, would he be a great orator or no? In other words, would he have almost absolute power of doing good to mankind in a free country, or no? So he wills this, he must follow these rules.

"Believe me, truly yours,

"H. BROUGHAM."

All this training and preparation for action—when all the time the future orator is earning nothing, and doing nothing visible and lucrative, however much he may be sowing in youth that he may reap in age—this will seem very strange to the Short-cut and Useful Knowledge School.

"What!" says Mr. Shandy, "is a boy to be seven long years in TUPTO-ing it at Greek and Latin,—four years at his *Probations* and *Negations*;—the fine statue still lying in the middle of the marble

block,—and nothing done but his tools sharpened to hew it out! 'Tis a piteous delay!"

And here we must stop to remark, that many a parent has said the same thing,—"My education never commenced till I left school," said a friend.—"Your information did not," was the reply; "but your formation did: it was going on all the time." Never mind, it can't be helped. We cannot reverse the order of things; we must form the mind first, and fill it afterwards: or, as Mr. Shandy said, "sharpen your tools" for the work of life. And with all the advantages of an examination system, one bad result is, that it puts the filling in place of the forming, and spoils both: it encourages mere odds and ends of undigested and indigestible knowledge. The sort of knowledge crammed for examinations by boys—even University classmen will feel rather guilty as they read this—is akin to London flowers without roots, wooden nutmegs, and painted canaries. For all these mendacious commodities "pass an examination," and that is all they are intended for. But examiners will grow wiser with experience, and learn to test mental habits as well as mental stores—the former to last for a life, the latter to evaporate in a month.

However, there is moderation in all things, and

to return to the present subject, Mr. Shandy says:—

"Was not the great Julius Scaliger within an ace of never getting his tools sharpened at all? Forty-four years old was he before he could manage his Greek; and Peter Damianus, Lord Bishop of Ostia, as all the world knows, could not so much as read when he was of man's estate; and Baldus himself, eminent as he turned out after, entered upon the law so late in life, that everybody imagined that he intended to be an advocate in the other world."

And after these humorous remarks, Mr. Shandy concluded with the identical conviction a hundred years ago, which has so often been repeated, but never came to pass,—

"'I am convinced, Yorick,' continued my father, half-reading and half-discoursing, 'that there is a north-west passage to the intellectual world; and that the soul of man has shorter ways of going to work, in furnishing itself with knowledge and instruction, than we generally take with it.'"

However, Lord Brougham evidently does not recommend any such voyage of north-west discovery. His Lordship finds no other "royal road" to eminence than that which lies along the highway of hard work and laborious practice. And there

is so little fear of any one being wearied by hearing Lord Brougham on a subject so peculiarly his own, that we may venture to add an extract from his recent address to the students at Glasgow :—

"On one or two matters I would ask their and your permission to dwell, and but for a few minutes; not that I can suppose these subjects to be neglected by the teachers, but that I would earnestly join my voice to theirs, and inculcate the closest attention to them. The study of Attic oratory is one matter which cannot be too strongly pressed upon the pupil; that of the ancient analysis is another. The tendency of mathematical studies in the present day is to disregard the Greek geometry; that of classical studies is clearly to cultivate Greek learning, but rather exalts the poets above the orators. The immeasurable superiority of the Greek to the Roman oratory is not only evinced by the devotion of the greatest master of the latter to the Attic models, by his constant study of them, by his not ceasing, even in advanced life, to practise Greek declamation, by his imitating —nay, translating from them, in his finest passages; but one consideration is decisive on this head—the Greek oratory is incomparably better adapted to our modern debating, or business-like

habits; and while it may be truly affirmed that, with all this excellence, hardly one of Cicero's orations could even in parts ever be borne either by the senate or the forum in our times, there is hardly one of the Greek which might not in circumstances like those for which they were composed, with a few alterations, be delivered before our tribunals or our public assemblies. Some of Demosthenes' very finest orations were those in private causes, and composed to be delivered by the parties, one of them by himself. They are very little studied now, but they well deserve ample attention, both for the matter and the style.

"Also the example of the ancient masters is ever to be kept before you in one important particular, their extreme care in preparing their speeches. Of this the clearest proofs remain. Cicero having a book of passages to be used on occasions is well known; indeed, we have his own account of it, and of the mistake he once made in using it (*Ad Att.* xxi. 6); but the book of *proœmia* which Demosthenes had, has come down to us, the only doubt being raised (though I hardly think there can be any) whether they were, like Cicero's passages, kept ready for use, or passages prepared of speeches, the preparation of which, on the whole, he had not time to finish. One thing is certain,

that he was very averse to extempore speaking, and most reluctantly, as he expressed it, 'trusted his success to fortune;' and his orations abound in passages, and even parts of passages, again and again used by him, with such improvements as their reception on delivery or subsequent reflection suggested. There is even seen great parsimony in preserving small portions unchanged, when the right composition had been attained. I have examined this subject very fully on different occasions, and I find the views taken are approached by Attic scholars, both in England and France.

"I dwell upon this subject at present, in order to illustrate the necessity of full preparation and of written composition to those who would attain real excellence in the rhetorical art. In truth, a certain proficiency in public speaking may be acquired by any one who chooses often to try it, and can harden himself against the pain of frequent failures. If he is a person of no capacity his speeches will be very bad; but, even though he be a man of genius, they will not be eloquent. A sensible remark or a fine image may occur; but the loose, and slovenly, and poor diction, the want of art in combining and disposing of his ideas, the inability to bring out many of his thoughts, and the incompetency to present any of them in the

best and most efficient form, will reduce the speaker to the level of an ordinary talker. His diction is sure to be clumsy, incorrect, unlimited in quantity, and of no value. Such a speaker is never in want of a word, and hardly ever has one that is worth hearing. '*Sine hac quidem conscientia*' (says Quintilian, speaking of written composition) '*ipsa illa ex tempore dicendi facultas inanem modo loquacitatem dabit et verba in labris nascentia*' (xliii.). It is a common error to call this natural eloquence; it is the reverse; it is neither natural nor eloquent.

"A man under the influence of strong feelings or passions, pouring forth all that fills his mind, produces a powerful effect on his hearers, and often attains without any art the highest beauties of rhetoric. The language of the passions flows easily, but is concise and simple, and the very opposite of the wordiness just described. The untrained speaker, who is also unpractised, and utters according to the dictates of his feelings, now and then succeeds perfectly; but in these rare instances he would not be the less successful for having studied the art, while that study would enable him to succeed equally in all he delivers, and would give him the same control over the feelings of others, whatever might be the state of his own. Herein, indeed, consists the value of the

study; it enables him to do at all times what nature only teaches on rare occasions. Nor is there a better corrective of the faults complained of in the eloquence of modern times than the habitual contemplation of the ancient models, more especially the chaste beauties of the Greek compositions, and the diligent practice of severe written preparation. It is the greatest of all mistakes to fancy that even a carefully prepared passage cannot be delivered before a modern assembly.

"I once contended on this point with an elegant classical scholar, and no inconsiderable speaker himself, Lord Melbourne, who at once undertook to point out the passages which had been prepared, and those which were given off-hand, and at the inspiration of the moment. He was wrong in almost every guess he made. Lord Denman, on a more remarkable occasion, at the bar of the House of Lords, in the Queen's case, made the same mistake upon the passage delivered before the adjournment in the first day of the defence.

"The objection often made, that prepared passages are artificial, and disclose the preparation, is wholely groundless. In the first place, nothing can be more artificial than a speech must in almost all cases necessarily be that is anything beyond mere conversation. Next, it is the manner, not

the substance, which is prepared; and, finally, if the art used is shown, and not concealed, the artist alone is in fault."

Such is the advice on the art of Oratory with which we have been favoured by one of the greatest orators of modern times.

With all this advice on forming the mind for public speaking, we must especially remember that *ars est celare artem*—that the spell is broken the moment the machinery appears. It is in vain to have the Attic mould without the Attic fire.

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more."

Canning said of Grattan that the last two years of his parliamentary exhibitions was a failure: you saw the mechanism of his oratory without the life. It was like lifting the flap of a barrel-organ and seeing the wheels. This was unlucky for Grattan's fame, for it revealed his artificial style. When you thus saw the skeleton of his sentences, without the flesh on them, you were induced to think what once seemed flashes only primings, kept ready for the occasion.

Few American orators have a higher reputation than Henry Clay; yet Clay was a man who attained his proficiency not without hard work. He

said that he owed it chiefly to this practice; that at the age of twenty-seven—rather late in life, one would suppose—he commenced and continued for years the process of daily reading and speaking upon the contents of some historical or scientific book.

The celebrated Irish orator, John Philpot Curran, laboured under a disadvantage similar to that to which Demosthenes is said to have felt, and to have eventually cured, by speaking with pebbles in his mouth amidst the roaring of the sea-shore.

Curran had such a defect in his speech, that he was called "Stuttering Jack Curran." And even at a later period, while studying the law, he was satirised as "Orator Mum," because, at his first attempt in his Debating Society, he could not get out a single sentence. Yet he soon made up for his failure, and for months continued to enunciate and to recite the finest passages of our literature, and, in every respect, to study the art of oratory, not as if it were the spontaneous gift of genius, but as a talent to be cultivated by judicious and persevering exercise.

But the style of speaking in which Curran failed—in making a set speech, and one both in itself and in the occasion purely artificial—was of a kind most trying to every speaker. The time to speak with effect is when the occasion

almost forbids you to be silent. When thus you feel in sympathy with your audience, as if all were anxious and ready to hear you, then do you feel the stimulus, the very voice of nature within you, which prompts a counsel in the middle of a trial in a court of law. This is the stimulus felt by a speaker in Parliament when he rises—not, as with a maiden speech, merely to speak to the gallery, or to break the ice against another occasion, but when he rises, positively as a matter of business, and lifted up naturally by the occasion, as one who has something to say.

The Duke of Wellington is reputed to have advised a friend, who said he was no speaker, and could not, therefore, venture to open his lips, if he went into Parliament,—"All you have to do is to speak out what you have to say, and quote no Latin." In this advice, the speaking only "what you have to say," and when you are the proper person to say it, is the point: and it was with reference to this indispensable position of a speaker, that he should really "have something to say," that a distinguished American orator once said to his son,—

"John, be sure you never get up till you have something to say, and that you always sit down as soon as you have done."

As to the last part of this advice, we remember hearing Professor Creasy remark, that for all occasional and after-dinner speeches, he would advise every man to be prepared with some sentence with which to leave off; for, many a man was cheered for one or two good things when he rose, who, after all, "did not sit down when he had done," but stood hammering and stammering, and talking words without meaning, in a vain endeavour to end like a firework, with a bang, to his own satisfaction.

But of all formal speeches, an after-dinner speech is the most trying, by far. It is quite a punishment to sit next an unhappy man who has his name on the toast-list. It is related that Washington Irving was afraid to attend the dinner of the Literary Fund, because his health would be drunk, and he was afraid of a speech, having, he said, broken down at the Dickens' dinner (of which he was chairman), in America.

"I found that Lockhart," said Thomas Moore, "also had declined, and only could be prevailed on to attend on condition that his health should not be given."

Mrs. Thompson gives a very touching description of the poet, Thomas Campbell, when he broke down in an attempt to reply at the same literary dinner.

"Prince Albert presided, supported on the one hand by the Marquis of Lansdowne, and on the other by the Duke of Cleveland. The Prince had modestly begun, and elegantly ended *his* part —the great and the mitred had played theirs— when the awful—'Gentlemen, charge your glasses: Mr. Campbell and the Poets of England,—three-times-three!' rang upon my ear. Then spoke Hallam, and he spoke admirably. He referred to the long intimacy with Mr. Campbell that he had enjoyed. He eulogised the genius in his deep tones. He spoke not long. His voice ceased, and, amidst a general silence, Mr. Campbell rose to return thanks. Again I saw that small and regular face. Again the well-proportioned features were before me; but the features were pinched, the face joyless, the eyes heavy. The sight was painful. He began to speak, and he spoke well. His voice, though not strong, was clear; and the intellect awakened, as it seemed, at his bidding; and, in the few short sentences which he was permitted to utter, the fancy and wit of the Campbell of yore might be observed. Suddenly he broke down. He repeated himself. His compliment to Hallam was reiterated. The nerves were shaken by the effort. Oh! he should have been soothed—encouraged—cheered. Will you

believe it? The people around him, as the Poet of Britain strove to regain the thread of his harangue, coughed him down, groaned, checked him in every rude and opprobrious manner. A burst of cheers reproved the brutality, and Campbell rose again to speak; but it was too late. Feeble —long retired into private life—shattered in strength—and perfectly able to comprehend what construction was cruelly and erroneously put upon his failure, the words fell in confusion from his lips. After a moment he ceased to speak, seemed to recollect himself, and sat down. In a few minutes I saw him going away. He was deeply wounded by the rudeness which might have been spared to his feelings. He went out, and returned no more."

Considering our authority, this must be true; but, at the same time, it is difficult to recognise the spirit and the feeling of our countrymen in the wretches who were capable of such inhuman conduct. How came such creatures at such a meeting?

Thomas Moore once remarked to Lord Lansdowne, in talking of public speaking, that a sort of bewilderment came over him when he commenced, though, happily, he soon recovered himself. Lord Lansdowne said, to Moore's great surprise, that

he rarely spoke in the House without feeling the approach of the same loss of self-possession, and found that the only way to surmount it was to talk on, at all hazards. He added that those *common-places,* which most men accustomed to public speaking have, ready cut and dry, to bring in on all occasions, were used by them as a mode of getting over these blank intervals, when they do not know what to say next, but, in the meantime, must say *something.*

Considering all the trials and all the difficulties of public speaking, we are apt to wonder that men so readily undertake it. But there is a peculiar excitement, and, perhaps, a certain gratification of that vanity, from which the wisest is not free, that urges the public speaker on. "They talk," said Sheridan, to Lord Holland, "of avarice, lust, ambition, as *great* passions. It is a mistake—they are *little* passions. Vanity is the great commanding passion of all. This excites the most heroic deeds, and impels to the most dreadful crimes. Save me from this passion, and I can defy the others. They are mere urchins, but this is a giant."

To the comparative facility of speaking when we have something to say, and when it is natural to say it, we must attribute the greater eloquence

of ladies. M. Bautain says truly, "that the ladies naturally speak better than the gentlemen. They express themselves more easily and more vividly, and with more arch simplicity; and this, he thinks, is because they feel more rapidly and more delicately, while the loquacity for which they are remarkable is only the effect of their constitution and temperament. Hence there are so many ladies who write good letters. They write as they speak: they speak pretty much as birds sing, and their language has the same charm."

This acute observer goes on to remark that, with ladies, the sweetness of their organ, the flexibility of their voice, the variety of their intonations, according to the feeling which animates them; the play of their features, which adds so much to the effect of words; their pleasing gestures, and, indeed, the gracefulness of their whole exterior,—that all this gives them much of the power of orators, without thinking of it, and all the success in their own sphere and within the circle of their activity. "For, none know better how to touch, persuade, and influence, which, I think, is the end and the perfection of eloquence."

We will now offer a few specimens of the speeches of our finest orators, and, in some instances, we may do well to quote the estimate

formed by contemporaries. For oratory is the art, above all others, which most defies our power to convey any adequate impression of its great masters. The mind of the poet is enshrined in his verse. The mind of the painter or the sculptor in the canvas or the marble. Who can convey a Fox or a Sheridan, when not only the excitement and the occasion which added force to his words have passed away, but when the eye can no longer be riveted by the energy of his action, nor the ear by the force of his intonations, and when the drama is comparatively dumb-show, and even the words, which alone survive, are far from being, like a modern report, a faithful transcript of the speech?

Colley Cibber also says, very elegantly, "Pity it is that the momentary beauties, flowing from an harmonious elocution, cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record; that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the breath and motion that presents them, or, at best, can but faintly glimmer through the memory of a few surviving spectators."

Garrick well expressed the same idea in his Prologue to the *Clandestine Marriage*:—

"The Painter's dead, yet still he charms the eye;
While England lives his fame can never die:

But he who struts his hour upon the stage
Can scarce protract his fame through half an age;
Nor pen nor pencil can the Actor save:
The art and artist have one common grave."

The experienced orator knows that often little aids produce great effects. His object is to produce a given impression on the minds of his hearers, to last and to operate only for a given space of time. It little matters how that impression is produced. It is immaterial whether it results from his speech being more effective, or the minds of his hearers being better disposed to hear him. A preacher who enters the pulpit when another has read the service strikes a new chord with his very voice, and commands less dull and weary ears. Even amidst the cautious speculators of the Stock Exchange, it is said that a brilliant and cheering day increases the brightness of their hopes to the extent of an eighth per cent, while in a court of law the fact of a jury being fresh for their work, and rather proud than impatient of their enforced attendance, this has a decided influence on the result.

It is related that a Minister, anxious to carry a certain motion, said, on entering the House, "Three cheers for our friend, the Father of the House of Commons, on the birth of a son!" and that the consequence was, that the idea of the oldest of

their members rejoicing in a new act of paternity so far amused the House that every member was in good humour, and little opposition offered to the business which followed.

Lord Erskine was very careful in taking advantage of all such indirect influences. He would examine the court the night before the trial, in order to select the most advantageous place for addressing the jury. On the cause being called, the crowded audience were, perhaps, kept waiting a few minutes before the celebrated stranger made his appearance; and when, at length, he gratified their impatient curiosity, an unusually nice wig, and a pair of new yellow gloves, distinguished his person beyond the ordinary costume of the barristers of the circuit.

As to juries, and the way their verdict is influenced, every one has heard stories of a ludicrous kind; but, in point of absurdity, no fiction can surpass some well-attested truths. Such verdicts as "Sarved her right," have been often told. We have ourselves heard verdicts no less absurd than the reputed Cornish one,—"Not guilty, with a strong recommendation not to do it again." Human judicature must ever be liable to err, and trial by jury—when the theory is that the jury are best able to see right, but the practice is for the judge

to take a great deal of pains for fear they should do wrong — is to be defended only on those grounds, that if the system does sometimes work badly, every other system that can be suggested would obviously do worse.

In Twiss's *Life of Lord Eldon* it is recorded, that Eldon used to relate some remarkable instances of the utter indifference which North-country juries, some sixty years ago, evinced to the solemnity of their oath. At one assizes, Eldon discovered that a jury had made up their minds to give him verdicts, because they knew he was a North-countryman. On another occasion, after giving him verdict after verdict, a jury acknowledged that they thought it only fair to turn about and give some of the other gentlemen a verdict or two. This is, literally, the old joke of the zigzag jury who said "Guilty" and "Not guilty" alternately, all through the assizes.

However absurd the zigzag principle may sound, it is one that ever will influence ignorant men. We once witnessed a singular instance of this some twenty years since, not before a judge, be it observed, but before a Chairman of the Quarter Sessions at Leicester. One verdict had been given so plainly contrary to evidence, that the prisoner's counsel was betrayed into exclaiming

audibly, "In all my life I never saw such a jury!" The next prisoner as manifestly deserved a verdict of "Guilty," as the last of "Not guilty;" but the jury were evidently afraid to say so, and without the least hesitation acquitted the second, as if to make amends to the first criminal.

CHAPTER XI.

F. BUXTON'S BREWERY DINNER—LORD GREY, FOX, CANNING, AND TIERNEY, CHARACTERISED—DR. CHALMERS AND SIR R. PEEL—LORD DUDLEY AND WARD—SPEECHES, HOW MADE AND MENDED—SHERIDAN—STYLE OF THE PRESENT DAY.

We now will introduce a few anecdotes to enable the rising generation to form some opinion of the comparative merits of those great speakers whom our fathers have ever mentioned with enthusiasm, and, as we trust will appear, not merely with that laudatory enthusiasm which so naturally fires our admiration for things that are past.

In June, 1831, several members of the Government, and other gentlemen, went to look over the Brewery in Spitalfields, and afterwards dined there with Mr. Buxton, professedly on beefsteaks cooked in one of the furnaces. Mr. J. J. Gurney gives the following account of the party:—"It was my agreeable lot to sit between Lord Grey and Dr. Lush-

ington, and the latter being occupied by his friend on the other side, I was left to converse with the Premier, which I had the pleasure of doing for nearly two hours. We talked of his long political course; and Lord Shaftesbury, who sat next to him on the other side, complimented him on the subject.

"*Lord Grey.* 'I came into Parliament for Northumberland when I was two-and-twenty, and I have been forty-five years a senator.'

"Of course it was easy to draw the inference that he was sixty-seven years of age. On my expressing the interest I felt for him, and even sympathy, under the burden he was bearing, he replied,—

"'I am much too old for it. I would have refused the undertaking, if I could have done so consistently with my duty.'

"Our next subject was parliamentary eloquence. I asked him who, amidst the vast variety of orators whom he had been accustomed to hear, appeared to him to be the best speaker and most able debater?

"*Lord Grey.* 'Beyond all doubt and comparison, Fox. His eloquence was irresistible. It came from his heart, and produced a corresponding effect on the hearts of his hearers.'

"When the dinner was ended, I quitted my post by Lord Grey, and joined Buxton, Lord Brougham, and the Duke of Richmond, at the top of the table. Buxton was telling a story on the subject of Reform (the only way in which that subject could be mentioned, as the dinner was not political, and Tories were present). 'A stage-coachman,' said he, was driving a pair of sorry horses, the other day, from London to Greenwich. One of them stumbled, and nearly fell. 'Get up, you *borough-mongering* rascal, you!" said the coachman to the poor beast, as he laid the whip across his back.' . . . . "Something led us (Lord Brougham and myself) to talk about Paley, and I mentioned the story of his having on his deathbed condemned his *Moral Philosophy*, and declared his preference for the *Horæ Paulinæ*, above all his other works.

"This made Brougham speak of both those works. 'Did you ever hear that King George the Third was requested by Mr. Pitt to make Paley a bishop? The King refused; and, taking down the *Moral Philosophy* from the shelf, he showed Pitt the passage in which he justifies subscription to Articles not fully credited, on the ground of expediency. 'This,' said the King, 'is my reason for not making him a bishop.'" Lord Grey overheard the Chan-

cellor's story, and confirmed it. 'But,' added the Chancellor, 'I believe the true reason why George the Third refused to make Paley a bishop was, that he had compared the Divine right of kings to the Divine right of constables!'"

There is, however, another story, that the king was offended by an uncomplimentary illustration of monarchy in Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*. Paley had represented one idle pigeon in a field surrounded by a number of other pigeons, all foregoing their own right of pecking to wait upon this one idle pigeon. Alluding to this description of the sovereignty he bore, the king said,—"What! Pigeon Paley? make a bishop of him? Pigeon Paley, indeed! No, never!"

Mr. Buxton subjoins:—"Our party at the Brewery went off in all respects to my satisfaction. I first led them to the Brewery. Lord Brougham inquired the wages of the draymen. I told him about 45*s.* weekly; and we allow them to provide substitutes for a day or two in the week, but we insist on their paying them at the rate of 26*s.* per week. 'Yes,' said he, 'I understand: these rich and beneficed gentry employ curates, and the curates of the draymen get about as much salary as those of the clergy.'

"After dinner we took them to the stables to

see the horses. Somebody said, 'Now, the Lord Chancellor will be at a loss; at all events he knows nothing about horses.' However, fortune favoured him, for he selected one of the best of them, and pointed out his merits. Some one proposed that he should get upon his back, and ride him round the yard, which he seemed very willing to do; and thus ends my history of the Lord Chancellor.

"Lord Grey looked care-worn, but was remarkably cordial."

Mr. Buxton had a very high opinion of Lord Grey. "If you talk with him for half-an-hour," he remarked on one occasion, "you find his intellect a head higher than anybody's else: he has more mind than any man in this country."

"There are few instances in modern times of a rise equal to that of Sir Edward Sugden. After one of the Weymouth elections, I was shut up with him in a carriage for twenty-four hours. I ventured to ask him what was the secret of his success? his answer was,—'I resolved, when beginning to read law, to make everything I acquired perfectly my own, and never to go to a second thing till I had entirely accomplished the first. Many of my competitors read as much in a day as I read in a week; but, at the end of twelve

months, my knowledge was as fresh as on the day it was acquired, while theirs had glided away from their recollection.'

"Nothing ever was so delightful as to hear Canning make a fine, rich, poetical speech, and then Tierney pull it to pieces. But Tierney has no name, wonderful as he was. That is, because he never *did* anything; but, to be sure, his talents were surpassing. He had the most delicate wit: everybody we hear now is coarse, blunt, and gross, compared to him. The House was extremely fond of him. Let him speak when he would, it would listen to him with eagerness. He deserted his party, and joined Lord Sidmouth's Government at last. It was, however, inscribed on his tomb, or proposed to be so,—'He lived without an office, and died without a debt.' Canning could be extremely entertaining, too; but his speeches were evidently prepared and polished. He was the first man I ever heard speak in the House, and I remember asking my neighbour who he was. There was also, when I first went into Parliament, another man of remarkable talents—Mr. Ward, afterwards Lord Dudley and Ward. He, too, finished his speeches down to the minutest comma, and he only made one or two in a year. You know the

epigram upon him, on its being said he was a man of no heart:—

> 'You say Ward has no heart, but I deny it;
> He has a heart—and gets his speeches by it.'

"The first time I heard Chalmers was in a chapel on the other side of the river. It was so crowded that Canning and Wilberforce had to climb in at the window.—Seven years after I heard Canning make that sermon the substance of a speech on the Catholic Question!

"A certain Member of Parliament changed his opinions rather rapidly after losing a place in the Government, whereupon my friend S—— quoted Lord Bacon's words,—'The two great alterants of human opinion are time and place.' 'Now,' said he, 'in this case, *time* there has been none, so' . . . But the remainder of the sentence was drowned in the laughter and applause of the House.

"Sir Robert Peel's Currency Act is said to have enormously increased the national debt. It certainly was one of the boldest measures that have been done in our time; but probably the author of it scarcely foresaw the whole result. But it was, perhaps, an act of justice. When Attwood brought forward his bill for its repeal, Mr. Grote

said he was like the unjust steward in the parable: 'How much owest thou? An hundred measures of oil. Then take thy bill, sit down quickly, and write fifty.' When Peel's Currency Bill was passing, Hudson Gurney moved an amendment, in which six members only supported him; of whom I was one, and Mr. Wodehouse another. Three days afterwards, however, the ministers, who had reconsidered the question, came down to the House, and carried that very amendment by a large majority. So we received the title of 'The seven wise men.'

"I lately dined in company with Sir James Scarlett. I asked him what was the secret of his pre-eminent success as an advocate. He replied: That he took care to press home the one principal point of the case, without paying much regard to the others. He also said that he knew the secret of being short. 'I find,' said he, 'that when I exceed half-an-hour, I am always doing mischief to my client. If I drive into the heads of the jury important matters, I drive out matter more important which I had previously lodged there.'"

Oh! that preachers would but act on this advice. We once heard of a poor man who told his parson—"Sir, you divided your sermon into three

parts. Well, I had the first part in my head, and then came the second part, and while I was trying to mind that, too, on comes the third part, and puts them both out!"

Thomas Moore has given us some fragments of the famous speech of Sheridan. Moore was well aware that effective oratory is calculated rather to be heard than read. The sympathy that existed between the animated speaker and the excited hearer may be wanting to convey the same impression to a cool and unimpassioned reader.

There is a story told of an ancient orator who wrote an oration in defence of a client, and, having read it from beginning to end, asked him what he thought of it. The client was at first delighted, and requested to hear it again. On the second hearing he did not like it so well, and, when the author had ventured upon a third reading, the disappointed client positively declared it was no defence at all!—On which the author sagaciously remarked, "You forget, my good friend, that this is written for persons who will only hear it once."

This anecdote fully illustrates the difference between a spoken and a written speech. Charles James Fox used to ask of a printed speech, "Does it read well?" And if answered yes, he would say, "Then it was a bad speech." At the present

day the reporters pretty freely correct the inaccuracies, say nothing of the hesitation, and eliminate the tautology of each honourable member. There is actually a probability that the language may be even better in the report, when more than usually incorrect in the delivery. Because, with the more finished speakers, the short-hand writer is more likely to adopt the exact words, whereas, when the speaker's language is such as to set all correction at defiance, the reporter translates it freely into his own—which will naturally be more accurate than the common style of a debate.

Of the speech of Sheridan, of which we were speaking, we will now give one extract. A specimen, however inadequate, will no doubt be acceptable—even although we are aware that some of our readers will be reminded of the very ancient story of a certain foolish man who, having a house to let, carried about a brick as a specimen. And the following extract we select, because it so well exemplifies those smoothly-flowing and nicely-balanced periods which Sheridan was so fond of turning and moulding by the nicest rules of harmony and rhythm.

The object of this paragraph was to qualify a maxim uttered by Burke, that prudence is a quality incompatible with vice. "I never," said Burke,

"knew a man who was bad, fit for service that was good. There is always some disqualifying ingredient, mixing and spoiling the compound. The man seems paralytic on that side: his muscles there have lost their very tone and character—they cannot move. In short, the accomplishment of any thing good is a physical impossibility with such a man. There is decrepitude as well as distortion; that 'he could not if he would,' is not more certain than that 'he would not if he could.'" —In allusion to this, Sheridan observed:—

"But I doubt whether we can read the history of a Philip of Macedon, a Cæsar, or a Cromwell, without confessing that there have been evil purposes, baneful to the peace and to the rights of men, conducted—if I may not say with prudence or with wisdom—yet with awful craft and most successful and commanding subtlety. If, however, I might make a distinction, I should say that it is the proud attempt to mix a *variety* of lordly crimes, that unsettles the prudence of the mind, and breeds this distraction of the brain. *One* master-passion, domineering in the breast, may win the faculties of the understanding to advance its purpose, and to direct to that object everything that thought or human knowledge can effect; but, to succeed, it must maintain a solitary

despotism in the mind,—each rival profligacy must stand aloof, or wait in abject vassalage upon its throne. For, the power that has not forbade the entrance of evil passions into man's mind has at least forbid their union; if they meet, they defeat their object, and their conquest, or their attempt at it, is the tumult. Turn to the virtues —how different the decree! Formed to connect, to blend, to associate, and to co-operate; bearing the same course, with kindred energies and harmonious sympathy, each perfect in its own lovely sphere, each moving in its wider and more contracted orbit, with different but concentering powers, guided by the same influence of reason, and endeavouring at the same blessed end—the happiness of the individual, the harmony of the species, and the glory of the Creator. In the vices, on the other hand, it is the discord that ensures the defeat: each clamours to be heard in its own barbarous language; each claims the exclusive cunning of the brain; each thwarts and reproaches the other; and even while their fell rage assails with common hate the peace and virtue of the world, the civil war among their own tumultuous legions defeats the purpose of the foul conspiracy. These are the Furies of the mind, my Lords, that unsettle the understanding; these are

the Furies that destroy the virtue, Prudence—while the distracted brain and shivered intellect proclaim the tumult that is within, and bear their testimony, from the mouth of God Himself, to the foul condition of the heart."

We must just observe that, since many of their lordships were men of high education, this piece of moral philosophy might be like a pleasing episode, or an agreeable diversion to them; but now, the gentlemen of the Manchester school would certainly yawn, and cry out "Question." But, even with the House of Lords at the present day, we doubt whether such a passage would not rather impair the effect of a speech. One reason is that, in these days, moral science is too trite a subject, and savours too much of the schools; and all rhetorical ornaments and artifices are recognised at a glance—like the old stage furniture and decorations, new only to the gallery, while the greater part of the audience are bent only on the progress of the plot. No man will be an effective speaker in the House of Lords, now, who does not go straight as an arrow to his mark—with words plain and forcible, and all the stirring energy of truthful sentiment and those winged words, culled chiefly from our racy Saxon dialect.

Dr. Johnson, in defending the style of Pope, alleged to be too ornate for a translation of Homer, remarks,—"It will be found, in the progress of learning, that in all nations, the first writers are simple, and that every age improves in elegance; a saturated intellect soon becomes fastidious, and knowledge finds no willing reception till it is recommended by artificial diction."

However true this progress from simplicity to ornament may be in poetry, in oratory the very reverse is the case. Here the progress is from a flowery and metaphorical to a plain and simple style. This change, so observable in the history of our great parliamentary speakers, may easily be explained.

Nothing pleases long which is not natural, and the sleights of art are rarely so good as to bear repetition. No sooner is the secret of the delusion detected than the spell is broken; and the magician, who once held us enchanted, must return to the level of common men.

Metaphors and figures of rhetoric, we are aware, may sometimes illustrate a subject, and increase the powers of language as a vehicle of thought. Thus Edmund Burke, in speaking of the democratical prejudice against the aristocracy, "the

cheap defence of nations," and against all titles, rank, and social honours, introduced one of the finest metaphors we ever heard, borrowing its similitude from a chastely and elegantly-veiled statue. Of the Revolutionists he was saying, that by such utilitarian philosophy they warred against all but the gross and the expedient, but as to the beautiful in taste or refinement, "all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off."

Here was a metaphor which really threw light upon his subject. All such figures as these the orator may employ in every stage of intellectual progress to the end of time. But, for once that rhetorical figures are so used as to enforce an argument, ten times at least they serve rather to encumber and to obscure. And if so, these are the kind of rhetorical artifices which the progress of civilisation tends to confine to their proper sphere—a sphere so narrow, that the most effective style for an orator, in the present House of Commons, is the language of common life. For, every member in the House is more or less trained to discriminate legal evidence in our many Courts and Petty Sessions. These Courts form an admirable school for learning to distinguish between sound and sense. They teach men to regard words at their proper value, to hold the speaker to the

point, and to acquiesce in nothing which they do not clearly understand.

A second reason that the style of our parliamentary oratory increases in simplicity is, that men meet not to discuss abstract principles, but to despatch a definite amount of public business, and to carry certain measures. Most of the various questions are by this time cleared of the mist of obscurity,—one truth after another has taken up its place among us as an axiom no longer to be questioned: political speculation has, to a great extent, turned to political science; and men are accustomed to look for plain and intelligible solutions to such difficulties as yet remain. If the question is one of policy, men expect the unimpassioned language of pure demonstration; if the question is one of fact, they expect a sensible and straightforward story. The chief requisites of a modern speaker in Parliament are clear ideas, and a certain Lord-Derby-like *vivida vis animi*, or intensity of energy, to send forth those ideas in one straight and impetuous stream, and to drive them home stirring and startling to the hearts of the audience. The speaker must have a clear view of his object, and go straight as an arrow to the mark. Every superfluous figure or ornament, how beautiful soever, is only a source of impa-

tience to an eager and an anxious hearer. Where men are listless and indifferent to the subject in debate, the orator may venture to fascinate and amuse; but simplicity will ever mark the language of emphatic truth.—Just as painted glass will embellish a chamber, but the more viewless and transparent the better when we really want to see.

CHAPTER XII.

CELEBRATED PASSAGES FROM BURKE—SIR R. PEEL COMPARED WITH SIR J. SCARLETT—ERSKINE IMITATED BY MACAULAY—COBBETT'S GRAPHIC VINDICATION OF THE CHURCH—DAME PARTINGTON—IRISH ELOQUENCE—SHERIDAN, GRATTAN, CURRAN.

"BURKE was the wonderful man of his day," said Wordsworth, and truly enough. Dr. Johnson and Lord Thurlow both acknowledged Burke to be a man whom they never wished to encounter without some preparation. Burke helped Adam Smith in his *Political Economy*. Burke also assisted Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Lectures on Painting*; and Fox acknowledged that he learnt more from Burke than from all his books. We will now venture on a few specimens of Burke's oratory, taken from his memorable prosecution of Warren Hastings.

"Nothing is more false than that despotism is the constitution of any country in Asia. Will your Lordships submit to hear the corrupt practices of mankind made the principles of govern-

ment? Was there ever heard that a governor would dare to heap all the evil practices, all the cruelties, oppressions, extortions, corruptions, briberies—of all the ferocious usurpers, desperate robbers, thieves, cheats, and jugglers, that ever had office from one end of Asia to another—and consolidating all this heap of the crimes and absurdities of barbarous domination into one code, establish it as the whole duty of an English governor. *He* have arbitrary power! My Lords, the East India Company have not arbitrary power to give him. The King has not arbitrary power to give him. Your Lordships have not, nor the Commons, nor the whole Legislature. We have no arbitrary power to give, because arbitrary power is a thing which neither any man can hold, nor any man give. No man can lawfully govern himself according to *his own will*, much less can one person be governed by the will of another. We are all born in subjection; all born equally, high and low, governors and governed; in subjection to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices, antecedent to our very existence; by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe. This great law does not arise from *our* conventions and compacts—all the force and sanction they have. Every good gift is of God!

'All power is of God! And He who has given the power, and from whom alone it originates, will never suffer the exercise of it to be practised upon any less solid foundation than the power itself. If all dominion of man over man is the effect of the Divine disposition, it is bound by the eternal laws of Him who gave it. If man were mad enough to make an express compact that should release the magistrate from his duty, and declare their lives, liberties, and properties dependent, not upon rules or laws, but upon his mere capricious will, *the covenant would be void.* The acceptor of it has not his authority increased, but his crime doubled."

The managers had been charged with a spirit of vindictiveness. This is finely retorted:—

"Lord Bacon has well said, that revenge is a kind of wild justice! It is so; and without this wild, austere stock, there would be no justice in the world. But when, by the skilful hand of morality, and wise jurisprudence, a foreign scion, but of the very same species, is grafted upon it, its harsh quality becomes changed, it submits to culture, and, laying aside its savage nature, it bears fruits and flowers, sweet to the world, and not ungrateful even to that Heaven to which it elevates its exalted head. The fruit of this wild stock is revenge, regulated, but not extinguished—revenge transferred from the

sufferer to the communion and sympathy of mankind. This is the revenge by which we are actuated, and which we should be sorry if the false, idle, girlish, novel-like morality of the world, should extinguish in the breast of those who have a great public duty to perform. This sympathetic revenge, which is condemned by clamorous imbecility, is so far from being a vice, that it is among the greatest of all virtues,—a virtue which the uncorrupted judgment of mankind has, in all ages, raised to the rank of heroism. To give up all the repose and pleasures of life, to pass sleepless nights and laborious days, and, what is ten times more irksome to an ingenuous mind, to offer one's self to calumny, and all its herd of hissing tongues and poisonous fangs, in order to free the world from fraudulent prevaricators, from cruel oppressors, from robbers and tyrants, has, I say, the test of heroic virtue, and well deserves the distinction. The Commons, despairing to attain the heights of this virtue, never lose sight of it for a moment. For seventeen years they have, almost without intermission, pursued, by every sort of inquiry, by legislative and by judicial remedy, the cure of this Indian malady, worse, ten thousand times, than the leprosy which our forefathers brought from the East. Could they have done this, if they had not

been actuated by strong, vehement, perennial passion, which, burning like the vestal fire, chaste and eternal, never suffers generous sympathy to grow cold, in maintaining the rights of the injured, or denouncing the crimes of the oppressor?"

Burke's remarks on the habits and history of India had been angrily discussed by the opposing counsel. They had charged him with attempting to perplex the cause by carrying the public mind into the mystic absurdities of Indian ceremonial, by images of ancient mythology, and by romances on the triumphs of Tamerlane and Gengis Khan. Those charges peculiarly roused the indignation of the great accuser, and, we agree with Dr. Croly, whose *Life of Burke* we would strongly recommend for perusal to all who are interested in this great man, that the whole of Burke's speeches scarcely contain a finer burst of oratorical rage than his answer:—

"They will show you, they say, that Gengis Khan, Kouli Khan, and Tamerlane, destroyed ten thouand times more people in battle than this man did. Good Heavens! have they run mad? Have they lost their senses in their guilt? Did they ever expect that we meant to compare this man to Gengis Khan, Kouli Khan, or Tamerlane? To compare a clerk in a bureau; to com-

pare a fraudulent bullock-contractor—for we could show that his first elementary malversations were in carrying on fraudulent bullock-contracts, which contracts were taken from him with shame and disgrace, and restored with greater shame and disgrace — to compare him with the conquerors of the world? We never said he was a *tiger* and a *lion;* no, we said he was a *weasel* and a *rat.* What we said was, that he had desolated countries by the same means that plagues of his description have produced similar desolations. We said that he, a fraudulent bullock-contractor, exalted to great and unmerited powers, can do more mischief than all the lions and tigers in the world. We know that a swarm of locusts, however individually despicable, can render a country more desolate than Gengis Khan or Tamerlane. When God Almighty chose to humble the pride and presumption of Pharaoh, and bring him to shame, he did not effect his purpose with tigers and lions. He sent lice, mice, frogs, and everything loathsome and contemptible, to pollute and destroy the country. Think of this, my Lords, and of your listening here to their long account of Tamerlane's camp of two hundred thousand people, and of his building a pyramid at Bagdad with the heads of ninety thousand of his prisoners."

Even the powerful sense and rich imagination of Burke embarrassed his effect in Parliament. He could not prevail on himself to discover the injury which is done to a cause by giving his hearers credit for too much taste, feeling, or knowledge. He overwhelmed dull men with imagery which would have "lapped a poet in elysium;" he flashed wit upon purblind eyes; he drew up the treasures of philosophy from their deepest depths, and poured them out before the men of the counting-house. He called "spirits from the vasty deep," and displayed all the creations and lustres of a mind master of all the magic of eloquence, before a crowd who thought only of their dinners and of the division.

A certain Spanish polemic used to say — "Ye powers that preside over controversy, give me — I ask no more — give me an adversary that understands me."

There are few passages in Sir Robert Peel's speeches in which he ventures on the philosophical, like Burke; still the following, taken from a speech delivered by Sir Robert at Glasgow, in 1837, may be quoted. In enunciating his opinions concerning the defence of the House of Lords, Sir Robert Peel said,—

"I have read speeches by great legal autho-

rities, from which I find that they have not yet made up their minds about Reform in the House of Lords. They profess to be rather sorry for the necessity of it, but they see it fast approaching: they have no very great objection to the principle, but they have not yet discovered any particular scheme of Reform which quite suits their taste. Oh, what miserable trifling! They may spare themselves the trouble of comparison. Let them take the first. Whether in the place of the House of Lords there shall be a Council of Ancients, or a Council of Five Hundred, or a new body elected by the Peers, or a body elected by the heads of families, or whether the Peers shall have a suspensive vote — take one project or the other, the effect will be the same.

"Do you believe that you can uproot the oak of the forest, that has seen many a generation pass from the cradle to the grave? Do you think that you can uproot that noble production, with the ancient trophies and achievements of a thousand glorious deeds and victories suspended from its branches?

'. . . Quercus sublimis in agro,
Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum . . .'

"Do you think you can dig a trench around it

— upheave it from the earth — sever the myriads of minute fibres and ramifications, the growth of centuries, that have incorporated and made it one with the soil, and by the aid of pulleys, and props, and buttresses, and such machinery as law-offices can employ, do you presume to transplant the venerable ruin, and bid it abide the pelting of the storm? No, no; the first gust of popular passion that shall sweep along the level of Democracy will bring it to the ground, and with it all the poor contrivances of artificial machinery which have been used to support it; and miserable will be the consolation we shall have that the weak devisers of that machinery, and the artificers of that ruin, will be the first to be overwhelmed in the crash."

It was not often that Sir Robert Peel indulged his classic taste to this extent. But this passage is quite enough to show how much higher he might have risen in the scale of eloquence if, like Canning, he had made it his *forte*.

Sir Robert Peel was a truly practical man. He never spoke but for a purpose, and exhibited in the House of Commons the same kind of eloquence that Sir James Scarlett practised in the courts of law. Both of these most influential speakers cautiously observed the Grecian orator's rule,—to study the people. Now, the class of

people Sir R. Peel had to study were, in a great proportion, shrewd and unpretending men of business — men who used to say that Canning was too fine by far; they had little enough to do with the boasted achievements of the Greeks and Romans, but preferred a speech confined to traffic and tariffs, and the immediate interests of their constituents. Accordingly, Peel had no inducement to cultivate a style in unison with his academical tastes and studies. Neither would he expect to increase his influence in the House by a philosophical style, and the formal enunciation of principles of political science. This was a course which Edmund Burke had tried, and in which, as regards any influence in the debates, he had signally failed.

Indeed, it is related of one of the finest of Burke's published speeches — and Burke, in the absence of shorthand writers, was his own reporter — the speech on the Arcot debts, that this oration produced so little effect in its delivery, that Pitt and Grenville agreed that they need not even trouble themselves to reply.

We mean not to compare Sir R. Peel's powers either to those of Canning in brilliancy, or to those of Edmund Burke in philosophic statesmanship, but we do mean to say that his speeches repeatedly

evinced so much of the orator, and so much of the statesman, that he appears to have wanted rather the motive than the power to take a higher place in the rank of Parliamentary speakers than he really vindicated to himself, and higher than public opinion ever assigned him.

As a specimen of Lord Erskine's eloquence, we will give but one extract, and that from a speech on behalf of Stockdale, who was charged with publishing a libel, in saying that the prosecution then going on against Warren Hastings "originated in misrepresentation and falsehood."

In this passage we call attention chiefly to the plain and pointed Saxon diction, and the forcible and stirring effect produced by simple words.

Also, the passage is remarkable as having evidently formed the model of that celebrated description of the same scene in Lord Macaulay's essay on Warren Hastings:—

"Gentlemen, before I venture to lay the book before you, it must be yet further remembered that the trial of Mr. Hastings at the bar of the Lords had actually commenced long before its publication.

"There, the most august and striking spectacle was daily exhibited which the world ever witnessed. A vast stage of justice was erected,

awful from its high authority, splendid from its illustrious dignity, venerable from the learning and wisdom of its judges, captivating and affecting from the mighty concourse of all ranks and conditions which daily flocked into it, as into a theatre of pleasure; there, where the whole public mind was at once awed and softened to the impression of every human affection, there appeared, day after day, one after another, men of the most powerful and exalted talents, eclipsing by their accusing eloquence the most boasted harangues of antiquity, rousing the pride of national resentment by the boldest invectives against broken faith and violated treaties, and shaking the bosom with alternate pity and horror by the most glowing pictures of insulted nature and humanity; ever animated and energetic from the love of fame, which is the inherent passion of genius; firm and indefatigable from a strong prepossession of the justice of their cause."

Taking from this passage the idea and the mere form into which he should cast his glowing thoughts, Lord Macaulay wrote as follows—a description than which at the present day there are few more admired in English literature:—

"The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great hall of William Rufus—the hall which

had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings—the hall which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers—the hall where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment—the hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame.

"Neither military nor civil pomp was wanting. The avenues were lined with grenadiers. The streets were kept clear by cavalry. The peers, robed in gold and ermine, were marshalled by the heralds under Garter King-at-Arms. The judges, in their vestments of state, attended to give advice on points of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords—three-fourths of the Upper House, as the Upper House then was—walked in solemn order from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior baron present led the way—George Elliott, Lord Heathfield, recently ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets and armies of France and Spain.

"The long procession was closed by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of the realm—by the great dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the King. Last of all came the Prince of Wales,

conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing. The grey old walls were hung with scarlet.

"The long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator.

"There were gathered from all parts, of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art. There were seated round the Queen the fair-haired young daughters of the House of Brunswick. There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present.

"There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage.

"There the Historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres; and when, before a Senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa.

"There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age. The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the

sweet smiles of so many noble matrons. It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine, from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition—a treasure too often buried in the earth—too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid.

"There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There, too, was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, Art has rescued from the common decay.

"There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, criticised, and exchanged repartees, under the rich peacock-hangings of Mrs. Montague.

"And there the ladies, whose lips, more persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried the Westminster election against Palace and Treasury, shone round Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire."

To return more immediately to our subject, let us add two or three more of the most celebrated effusions of modern times. The following from Canning, in a speech delivered (be it remembered) in sight of the harbour at Plymouth, will perhaps be new to most of the present race of

readers, although it was repeatedly quoted with admiration for many years:—

"Our present repose is no more a proof of our inability to act than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float in the waters above your town, is a proof they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted for action. You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses, now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon, upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion—how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage—how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery, collect its scattered elements of strength, and awake its dormant thunders! Such as is one of those magnificent machines, when springing from inaction into a display of its strength—such is England herself, while, apparently passive and motionless, she silently causes the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion."

The following is the famous peroration of Lord Brougham on the Queen's trial. We quote it as one of the most celebrated passages in English oratory. Yet the effect in these days will be comparatively little felt. It is not Lord Brougham's

fault that his own words and figures of speech have been reproduced till they sound trite. As to the last sentence, we can hardly conceive that at the time it was uttered it could not have been effective, and at the present day it will do violence to the reverential feelings of many persons, because rather oratorical than in earnest:—

"Such, my Lords, is the case before you! Such is the evidence in support of this measure—evidence inadequate to prove a debt, impotent to deprive of a civil right, ridiculous to convict of the lowest offence, scandalous if brought forward to support the highest charge which the law knows, monstrous to stain the honour and blast the name of an English Queen. What shall I say, then, if this is the proof by which an act of judicial legislation, a parliamentary sentence, an *ex post facto* law, is sought to be passed against this defenceless woman? My Lords, I pray you to pause; I do earnestly beseech you to take heed. You are standing on the brink of a precipice—then beware! It will go forth as your judgment, if sentence shall go against the Queen. But it will be the only judgment which, instead of reaching its object, will return and bound back upon those who gave it. Save the country, my Lords, from the horrors of this catastrophe—save yourselves

from this peril. Rescue that country, of which you are the ornaments, but in which you can flourish no longer, when severed from the people, than the blossom when cut off from the roots and the stem of the tree. Save that country that you may continue to adorn it—save the Crown, which is in jeopardy—the Aristocracy, which is shaken—the Altar, which must totter with the blow which rends its kindred throne! You have said, my Lords—you have willed—the Church and the King have willed—that the Queen should be deprived of its solemn service. She has, instead of that solemnity, the heartfelt prayers of the people. She wants no prayers of mine; but I do here pour forth my humble supplications at the throne of mercy, that that mercy may be poured down upon the people, in a larger measure than the merits of its rulers may deserve, and that your hearts may be turned to justice."

These are highly-wrought passages; but we doubt whether, at the present day, they will stir the spirit within us half as much as those words of truth and honesty spoken by Sir Robert Peel in resigning office on the Corn-Law Question.—Sir Robert had declared he was "the Minister of the nation, not of any section of the House. The Queen, not any party, had called him to office;

and he was answerable for its best exercise but to his own conscience and to the country;" and then he ended with these memorable words, which have been branded by their very truth and earnestness in the heart of this country:—

"In relinquishing power I shall leave a name, severely censured, I fear, by many, who, on public grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties—deeply regret the severance, not from interest or personal motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements, the existence and maintenance of a great party, constitutes a powerful instrument of Government. . . . . I shall surrender power, censured by others who, from no interested motives, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interest of the country. I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist, who, for less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed

food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with the sense of injustice."

In these passages from Burke, Sheridan, Erskine, and Sir R. Peel, we have undoubtedly a specimen of strong and vigorous language.

But there is also a more calm and common-sense and illustrative style—genuine English, not only in its plain and earnest and straightforward style of utterance, but also in the simple Saxon words by which the effect is produced: we allude to the style of William Cobbett, of which we now will give a specimen, valuable alike for the matter it contains and the vivid and forcible manner in which the ideas are conveyed.

The following is William Cobbett's illustration of the blessings of the Church of England:—

"Go upon a hill, *if you can find one,* in Suffolk or Norfolk; and you can find plenty in Hampshire and Devonshire and Wiltshire; look to the church steeples, one in about every four square miles at the most on an average—imagine a man, of small learning at the least, to be living in a genteel and commodious house, by the side of every one of these steeples, almost always with a wife and family; always with servants, natives of the parish, gardener, groom at the least, and all other servants.

A large farmyard, barns, stables, threshers, a carter or two, more or less of glebe and of farming. Imagine this gentleman having an interest, an immediate and pressing interest in the productiveness of every field in his parish — being probably the largest corn-seller in the parish, and the largest rate-payer — more deeply interested than any other man can possibly be in the happiness, harmony, morals, industry, and sobriety of the people in his parish. Imagine his innumerable occasions for doing acts of kindness; his immense power in preventing the strong from oppressing the weak; his salutary influence coming between the hard farmer, if there be one in his parish, and the feeble or simple-minded labourer. Imagine all this to exist close alongside of every one of these steeples, and you will at once say to yourself, Hurricanes and earthquakes must destroy the island before that church can be overthrown. And when you add to all this, that this gentleman, besides the example of good manners, of mildness, and of justice, that his life and conversation are constantly keeping before the eye of his parishioners — when you add to all this, that one day in every week he has them assembled together to sit in silence; to receive his advice, his admonitions, his interpretation of the will of God as applicable to their conduct and their

affairs; and that, too, in an edifice rendered sacred in their eyes, from their knowing that their forefathers assembled there in ages passed, and from its being surrounded by the graves of their kindred—when this is added, and when it is recollected that the children pass through his hands at their baptism, that it is he alone who celebrates the marriages, and performs the last sad service over the graves of the dead—when you think of all this, it is too much to believe that such a church can fall."

This is an excellent specimen of the concrete and the illustrative style of putting a case. But as to illustrations, for wit and point there are few, indeed, which equal Sydney Smith's Dame Partington, in his speech at Taunton in the year 1832:—

"I do not mean to be disrespectful, but the attempt of the Lords to stop the progress of Reform, reminds me very forcibly of the great storm at Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs. Partington on that occasion.

"In the winter of 1824, there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height—the waves rushed in upon the houses, and everything was threatened with destruction! In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm,

Dame Partington, who lived upon the beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, trundling her mop, squeezing out the sea water, and vigorously pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused. Mrs. Partington's spirit was up: but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs. Partington. She was excellent at a slop or a puddle, but she should not have meddled with a tempest. Gentlemen, be at your ease—be quiet and steady. You will beat Mrs. Partington."

Thomas Moore remarked,—"It is indeed singular, that all the eminent English orators—with the exception of Mr. Burke and Mr. Wyndham—should have been so little anxious for the correct transmission of their eloquence to posterity. Had not Cicero taken more care of even his extemporaneous effusions, we should have lost that masterly burst of the moment, to which the clemency of Cæsar towards Marcellus gave birth. The beautiful fragments we have of Lord Chatham are rather traditional than recorded. There are but two, I believe, of the speeches of Mr. Pitt corrected by himself—those on the Budget of 1792 and on the Union with Ireland. Mr. Fox committed to writing but one of his, namely, the tribute to the memory of the Duke of Bedford; and the only speech

of Mr. Sheridan, that is known with certainty to have passed under his own revision, was that which he made in answer to Lord Mornington. Mr. Wilberforce justly remarked, that the great test of a speaker was the effect actually produced; by which standard Canning was by no means to be compared with either Pitt or Fox."

If we try the oratory of Sheridan by this severe test, we find his great speech on the Begum charge fully equal to its reputation; for every tradition of its excellence is connected with its wonderful influence on the House.

First of all, it accomplished its object. The speaker carried his point. The impeachment of Warren Hastings was carried; and that, too, at a time when the interest created by the proceedings was failing, and when it was questionable whether the inquiry would not end as abortively as other Indian inquisitions that had preceded it.

Secondly. Sir W. Dolben moved an adjournment of the debate, saying that Mr. Sheridan's speech had left him in no fair state of mind to give a determinate opinion. Mr. Stanhope seconded the motion, saying that the speech had completely turned him; he before inclined to the side of Hastings. Mr. M. Montagu confessed the same revolution of sentiment.

Thirdly. We have many expressions of individual members and men of eminence.

Mr. Pitt said, "All parties were brought under the wand of the enchanter," and only vied with each other in describing the fascination by which they were bound; also, that "it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or of modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate or control the human mind."

Mr. Fox said, "All that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun."

Mr. Burke said, "It was the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition."

"Mr. Wyndham, twenty years later," Lord Macaulay informs us, "observed that the speech deserved all its fame, and was, in spite of some faults of taste, the finest that had been delivered within the memory of man." Mr. Fox, about the same time, being asked by the late Lord Holland what was the best speech ever made in the House of Commons, assigned the first place, without hesitation, to the great oration of Sheridan on the Oude charge.

Of this speech there exists nothing deserving

the name of a report. Sheridan was offered a thousand pounds for the copyright of the speech if he would himself correct it for the press. But, whether from indolence or policy, the orator did not comply: and here he consulted best for his fame. Having played for a great prize and won, he acted wisely in leaving off a winner. And since the voice and the action of an orator, as well as a certain energy and intensity of feeling, are all like so many wires, by which, as well as by his words, the mind of the speaker sways and electrifies the feelings of the hearers, Sheridan did himself but bare justice if he intended to decide that this great effort of his genius should not be estimated by the mere words alone.

Moore says, "Imagination transcends reality. We may now indulge in dreams of the eloquence that could produce such effects, as we do of the music of the ancients and of the miraculous powers attributed to it, and that with as little risk of having our fancies chilled by the perusal of the one, as there is of our faith being disenchanted by hearing a single strain of the other."

And here the name of Sheridan, linked as it is with that of Burke and Grattan, reminds us that our literature owes much to the Irish. They certainly are a most eloquent race. They may be

sometimes noisy and redundant, but they are remarkable for a rich colouring, a power, a pathos, a full and free flow of stirring thought and brilliant expression. Writers of the school of Addison were smooth, measured, and pellucid; Hooker, Taylor, Barrow, and Milton, possessed original and commanding diction, rich and learned in the extreme, but their volumes are rather the treasuries of eloquence than eloquence itself. They have supplied the rough material. Their diction, "though powerful, is loaded and laborious; and their imagination, though rich and copious, is neither playful nor popular."

It remained for Edmund Burke, followed by Grattan and by Curran, to throw in the dash of passion, the play of fancy, the variety of imagery, and all that stirring and electric energy which have characterised the best of our later speeches.

As a specimen of the eloquence of John Philpot Curran, we can select no passage more admired than the following. It occurs in a speech for Mr. Hamilton Rowan, accused of a seditious libel. Curran defends him for having professed that his object was to procure "Universal Emancipation."

"I speak in the spirit of the British law, which makes liberty commensurate with, and inseparable from, British soil; which proclaims, even to the

stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon the British earth, that the ground on which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of Universal Emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced;—no matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an Italian or an African sun may have burnt upon him;—no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down;—no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery; the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in her own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains that burst from around him; and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of Universal Emancipation."

From the same speech we quote, not less for its good sense than for its eloquence, the following striking view of the advantages of a free press:—

"And what calamities are the people saved from by having public communication left open to them? I will tell you, gentlemen, what they are saved from, and what the Government is saved from. I will tell you also to what they are both exposed, by shutting up that communication. In

one case, sedition speaks aloud, and walks abroad; the demagogue goes forth; the public eye is upon him; he frets his busy hour upon the stage; but soon, either weariness, or bribe, or punishment, or disappointment bears him down, or drives him off, and he appears no more.—In the other case, how does the work of sedition go forward? Night after night, the muffled rebel steals forth in the dark, and casts another and another brand upon the pile, to which, when the hour of fatal maturity shall arrive, he will apply the flame."

The common informer, or the admitted evidence for the Government, in former days in Ireland, is thus described by Curran, in words which paint the hideous character of the iniquity, and express the deepest loathing of the human heart. Curran tells the jury:—

"I speak of what your own eyes have seen, day after day, during the course of this commission, from the box where you are now sitting; the number of horrid miscreants who avowed upon their oaths that they had come from the very seat of Government—from the Castle, where they had been worked upon by the fear of death and the hopes of compensation to give evidence against their fellows,—that the mild and wholesome councils of this Government are holden over these

catacombs of living death, where the wretch that is buried a man lies till his heart has had time to fester and dissolve, and then is dug up a witness. Is this fancy, or is it fact? Have you not seen him, after his resurrection from that tomb, and after having been dug out of the region of death and corruption, make his appearance upon the table, the living image of life and death, and the supreme arbiter of both? Have you not marked when he entered how the stormy wave of the multitude retired at his approach? Have you not marked how the human heart bowed to the supremacy of his power in the undissembled homage of *deferential horror?* How his glance, like the lightning of heaven, seemed to rive the body of the accused, and mark it for the grave, while his voice warned the devoted wretch of woe and death—a death which no innocence can escape, no art elude, no force resist, no antidote prevent? There was once an antidote—a juror's oath; but even that adamantine chain, that bound the integrity of man to the throne of eternal justice, is solved and melted in the breath that issues from the informer's mouth; conscience swings from her moorings, and the appalled and frighted juror consults his own safety in the surrender of his victim!"

In this speech Curran reflected, and that not much more strongly than the case deserved, on the corrupt testimony that is ever forthcoming in the midst of party strife and political agitation, and under any system established for the occasion to assist a Government prosecution.—A witness who comes forward voluntarily, without hope of favour, interest, or reward, may be believed. But when once a man is employed in the business of thief-catching he labours under two disadvantages, which seriously detract from the value of his testimony; disadvantages so serious, that, for our own part—to say nothing of spies and detectives—we look with great distrust and suspicion even upon the evidence of every parish constable who opens his lips in a Court of Justice.

The one is, that he has a character to gain, and not seldom "a job at the assizes," and a few pleasant days at the expense of the county, if he can only prove a prisoner guilty.

The other is, that the professional thief-catcher readily presumes that the accused is guilty: and if so, this conviction on the mind acts as a certain salve to the conscience of any uneducated man, while he misquotes words and exaggerates facts to place the guilt, in which he honestly believes,

in the strongest point of view to be also believed by judge and jury.

This weakness of the human mind, depending rather on a want of logic than a want of truth — combined with an ignorance of the extent to which little links of invention or exaggeration add tenfold strength to a chain of evidence—this is a failing we daily detect in every marvellous story told in common conversation: and if so, what trust can we repose in the evidence of men whose livelihood depends not on the discovery of truth, but on their actual success in proving any act of commission which their employer wishes to establish? And here we would not speak unfairly of all "offices for private inquiry." Such an office may possibly be conducted by respectable men, and with honourable intentions, but we speak only of the probable value of the evidence of men and women they too often employ—creatures who live by bribing servants, peeping through key-holes, and other practices, in which it is obvious that the truth and honesty required of a proper witness must stand no little in the way of their finding anything to attest.

CHAPTER XIII.

GREAT MEN CHARACTERISED BY CONTEMPORARIES — PULPIT ELOQUENCE OF IRVING — ANECDOTES OF GARRICK, MOORE, FOX, IZAAC WALTON — ONE MORE USE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

HAPPILY, with the opinions we have to offer on the comparative merits of great men who have passed away, we have been able to derive information from the letters of illustrious persons. And one great satisfaction in reading the correspondence of celebrated men is, that the facts related depend on the best of evidence: the impressions were conveyed while quite fresh, and can lose nothing by keeping. From the letters of William Wilberforce we collect the following accounts of men distinguished in their generation.

First, of the celebrated preacher, Mr. Irving. Wilberforce writes, in the year 1823, to Mrs. Hannah Moore:—

"You have doubtless heard of the prevailing

fashion of resorting to the Conventicle to hear Dr. Chalmers' late assistant, Mr. Irving. Lord Lansdowne and Mackintosh, and even the orthodox Lord Liverpool, and the vindicator of existing institutions, Mr. Canning, press into the meeting-house; and even with tickets you must be at the door an hour before the service commences, if you wish to get in without losing your coat pockets by mere mobbing. I have not been to hear him yet. I did not think it a good example to adopt the prevailing rage. It is literally true (I was told by one who was present) that an opera-frequenter related as a part of the green-room conversation of the last Saturday night, 'Shall you go to Irving's to-morrow?'"

Fox, said Wilberforce, was truly wonderful. He would begin at full tear, and roll on for hours together without tiring either himself or his hearers.

Canning, he said, was a more finished speaker than Pitt, but if the test of oratory is the effect, Canning was not a first-rate orator; he was not to be compared to either Pitt or Fox—he had not the art to persuade and conciliate. He never drew you to him in spite of yourself.

Wilberforce's impression of Sheridan was, that he came to the House with his flashes prepared and

ready to be let off; still, as to Sheridan's powers to surpass other men by effusions and flashes of wit purely extempore, there can be no doubt.

Goldsmith remarks, that every character who has excited either attention or praise has owed his success partly to merit and partly to a happy concurrence of circumstances in his favour. "Wit succeeds more from its being happily addressed, than from its native poignancy:" a *bon mot* relished at the Carlton, "would lose all its relish at the Cat and Bagpipes."

Of this remark of Goldsmith there is an excellent illustration in a story told of David Garrick.

Garrick was once asked, in a private company, to give effect to the dagger-scene of *Macbeth*. He began by describing the plot and the characters of the play; and, just as he was leading Macbeth stealthily and tremblingly to do the deed, he was interrupted by "Come, we know all about this—we want the dagger-scene." "Oh," said Garrick, "the spell is now broken. It is, indeed, 'a dagger of the mind.' Since you won't let me make you see the dagger first, no recitation of mine can produce any impression with Shakespeare's words."

Izaac Walton assists us with an apt illustration to the same effect:—"It is most certain that two lutes, being both strung and tuned to an equal

pitch, and one played upon, the other that is not touched being laid upon a table at a fit distance, will—like an echo to a trumpet—warble a faint, audible harmony in answer to the same tune." And thence he argues in favour of the sympathy of souls. Now, really, it does appear to us that there is a tendency in the magnetic passes and influence of an energetic speaker, first to attune the feelings of his audience to the tone and feeling of his own mind, and then to make their hearts throb in unison with his own the more easily afterwards.

There was something, says Thomas Moore most happily, that marred the impression of Burke's most sublime and glowing displays. "In vain did his genius put forth its superb plumage, glittering all over with the hundred eyes of fancy —the bird was heavy and awkward, and its voice seemed rather to scare than to attract."

The following we quote, not so much as a specimen of the oratory of Sir S. Romilly as for the striking influence it contains. As to Reform in Parliament, the extent to which Reform was wanted at the end of the last century—the extent to which our "Representative System" represented something else than the supposed constituents—it may seem incredible to posterity

that this defect in our constitution could be truthfully described in the following words:—

"This House is not the representative of the people of Great Britain; it is the representative of nominal boroughs, of ruined and exterminated towns, of noble families, of wealthy individuals, of foreign potentates; and this is surely the most to be dreaded of all the misfortunes that can befal a nation. No man can doubt what I allude to. We have sitting among us the Members of the Rajah of Tanjore and the Nabob of Arcot, the representatives of petty Eastern despots; and this is a thing notorious, publicly asked of, and heard with indifference."

No doubt one consequence of a Parliament, that did not represent the people of England, is to be traced in the following observation that belongs to the history of those times:—When, in the face of the strongest protests of the Americans, Granville brought forward the question of taxing the Colonists in the House, there was a very thin attendance of Members; Pitt was absent, and Edmund Burke, who was looking on, said that, far from anything inflammatory, it was the most languid debate he had ever heard in his life! and Horace Walpole actually alluded to that occasion, which proved so critical in the history of the

House of Commons—inasmuch as it decided the form and fate of the United States and created the Republic of America — as only "a slight day on the American taxes!"

Having said so much about Oratory, we may be in danger of giving currency to a very erroneous opinion; namely, that good and effective speaking, and a rapid succession of legislative enactments, constitute the chief, if not the only use, of a Member of Parliament and of our Representative assembly.

We will, therefore, conclude with a very able article which lately appeared in the *Economist* newspaper:—

"We think it is far too often assumed, that the principal functions of Parliament in the present day are legislative. In ordinary conversation it is often assumed that they are entirely legislative. If it so happen that no important enactment has marked a session, we constantly hear the House of Commons censured as if its time had during that session been entirely thrown away. No mistake, however, can be much greater. There are other functions of Parliament to which an attentive student of living politics will assign as much importance as to the legislative.

"In the first place, there is the old, but still important, function of watching and checking the

Ministers of the Crown. We must not estimate the value of this by the actual cases in which we see it exercised. All checks are valuable; not in proportion to the vices they discover, but in proportion to the vices which they prevent. No one who has ever watched the administration of an absolute Government closely can doubt that the vigilance of a popular Legislature prevents even the contemplation of many iniquities which, under a quiet despotism, are tacitly and easily perpetrated.

"But there is a second, and far more important, function of Parliament even than this. One great function of a popular Legislature is to express the opinion of the people who elected it. During the present session of Parliament the opinion of the English people has been emphatically and efficiently expressed upon several points of the greatest importance.

"Upon the whole Italian question, complex as it is, and many as are the issues it involves, the English opinion has been brought out in Parliament clearly and decidedly. We have said, simply and clearly, we will not interfere between the subjects of the various Italian Governments and these Governments. We will not, even for the sake of Italian freedom, intervene in contests between nations and their rulers. We hold as a principle that it is

useless to do so; for, as an all but universal rule, a nation which cannot conquer its freedom will not keep it when it is conquered for it. The test of its being fit for liberty is its being ready to make the sacrifices needful to obtain it. Such is our policy in a purely domestic struggle, with which no foreign Government interferes. But, on the other hand, if other nations, for whatever purpose, intervene, we must reserve the right of intervening too. We will not help subjects against their rulers, but we will not permit despotic Governments to put down a struggle for liberty in any country save their own.

"In the same way a very distinct opinion was pronounced on the annexation of Nice and Savoy to France, and an equally distinct one in favour of the Volunteer movement at home.

"We select these points instead of others, because upon them no action has been requisite. It may be argued, and, indeed, it has been argued, that all that has been done in Parliament on these matters was 'mere talk.' But those who so think have simply no conception of the nature of a popular Government. In such a Government it is not too much to say that 'speech is action.' The adequate expression of the real opinion of an influential nation is of incalculable importance, because that

opinion, if thoroughly brought out, may have incalculable weight. Nor can it be said that the expression given by Parliament to English opinion is inadequate. We might paradoxically say that it was inadequate on the whole, because it was imperfect in detail. All but the highest class of speakers doubtless give a very imperfect account even of their own sentiments, but in one sense their deficiency in eloquence is a merit. We want to express, by means of Parliament, not the opinion of our most eloquent or our most skilful statesmen —not the opinion of Mr. Gladstone or of Lord Palmerston—but the opinion of the average Englishman, of the mass of the English people. From the hesitating accents and ill-formed sentences of a hundred different Members of Parliament, this opinion gains an expression which is adequate to it—which is almost the only one adequate to it—which is absolutely the only one of which it is impossible to deny the genuineness.

"In the present state of mankind, when so large a part of the civilized world is governed by despotisms which do not permit the expression of public opinion at all; when another considerable part is governed by extreme democracies which provide no adequate organ for expressing the true opinion of the educated classes, it is impossible to

overrate the importance of the English Parliament —of the most efficient instrument for expressing the practical opinion of cultivated men which the world has ever seen.

"We must remember, too, that Parliament should have credit for much which does not pass within its walls. The proceedings supply an invaluable thread for public discussion, both in the press and in society. Every one who has to watch public opinion knows that it is idle to write articles upon subjects which the public is not interested in. The best articles on such subjects will lie unread. But how is the public to be interested in a subject? The public is a very miscellaneous multitude, and how is that multitude to be made to take any interest at the same time in the same thing? Only by Parliamentary discussion, by a Representative assembly, which becomes in effect an institution and piece of machinery, which, assisted by the Press—which Press would be comparatively powerless without the debate that creates the wide-spread interests—brings all the popular mind to bear upon any vital question, and expresses the feeling of the country at the same time."

CHAPTER XIV.

AUTHORS — THEIR VAIN EXPECTATIONS — THEIR LEGITIMATE AND NATURAL REWARDS — BOOKS OF GENIUS GOING BEGGING — PUBLISHERS NOT CRITICS — THEIR COOL CALCULATIONS — AUTHOR OF "GOODY TWO SHOES" — THE MUSE AND THE MARKET — INSPIRATION TO ORDER.

DEEPLY as we may sympathise with the disappointments and the hard struggles of genius—a spirit elevated too high above the earth to be capable of contending for a livelihood upon it—we must not be "tender-hearted in judgment," for fear we encourage the growth of that most baneful crop, false expectations. Some advisers have positively too much kind feeling for their office. We, however, propose to be plain-spoken and candid with literary aspirants, while we proceed to elucidate the true causes of the disappointments of men of genius, knowing full well that with authors, above all other men, one half of life is spent in unreasonable expectations, and the

other half in vain regrets that they cannot gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles.

The late Mr. Haydon, the painter, whose death charity would number in the bills of mortality among the divers forms of broken heart, was loud in his complaints that a mere *lusus naturæ*, in the form of Tom Thumb, was attracting thousands of spectators, while his own historical paintings scarcely paid the expenses of their exhibition. Yet how groundless was his discontent! Every child will give a penny for a peepshow, but not one in a thousand of the whole population has an eye for an historical picture.

Mrs. Barbauld has written one of the best essays in the English language on this very subject — *On the Unreasonableness of Human Expectations*. She cleverly explains how Providence has attached to excellence a reward of one kind, and man thinks it very hard he cannot reap another; in other words, that we are so unreasonable as to expect to choose the kind of fruit our tree shall bear.—The honest man, with smooth brow, and peace within his bosom, walks on foot; some hateful extortioner, pale and furrowed by the remorse and contentions of a grasping life, rides in his carriage. Here we see Honesty rewarded by inward peace, yet envying Extortion's outward

show. Common sense would observe that Honesty has already one reward, which he would be sorry to exchange—so why look for two?

Now, what are the natural fruits and the legitimate reward of literature? Does a "man's life consist," does his well-being solely depend, on "such things as he doth possess?" Can literature find none but a pecuniary reward? The most preposterous of all things in this world, the most absurd of all species of self-delusion, is that expectation—tenanting, as it has, garrets innumerable with brain-fretting and famished authors—which actually presumes a ready sale for every idea, without reference to demand or supply, and however little it may suit the taste or digestion of the public—composed, as that public is, of a large majority of careworn brows, empty heads, and aching hearts—a race of anxious, fretting creatures, far too much busied about the lower departments to bestow much on the upper stories of their habitation.

If this world is a pilgrimage, the author who wishes his book to be found, like a Murray's *Guide*, in every wallet, must propose to ease the shoe of life just where it pinches, and say, "Gentlemen, if this journey is to be wearisome and painful, like that of Peter Pindar's friend, I'll show you how

to boil your peas;" or "if your journey is like that of Bacchus in Aristophanes, when doomed to lead him from the upper world, life has not altered, we shall see, since that witty poet wrote, two thousand years ago,—So, I will tell you of all the seaport-towns, the bakers' shops, the half-way houses, the *tables d'hôte*, and monster hotels with fewest bugs!" Truly, Aristophanes had some idea of popular Authorship and Useful Knowledge!

Above all, the author must write for the many, and remember that days of railway speed want railway literature. The massive architecture and cathedral style of Hooker, or that congestion of the brain one suspects in Jeremy Taylor, Barrow, and Andrews,—all this wants both elbows on the table and a leisurely morning before us; and not only so, but when a man leaves off he feels like the boa constrictor when he swallowed the Witney blanket, and wants many a long day for digestion: therefore, we must not cater only for those who "walk through life on velvet lawns and smooth terraces," but we must remember the weary evenings of those who tread "the alpine paths of life against driving misery and through stormy sorrows, over sharp afflictions; walking with bare feet and naked breasts, jaded, mangled, and chilled."

Few authors, we suspect, have been known to

fame but those who write for the mere pleasure of living in the minds, memories, and motives of their fellow-men, and when they do so, surely this is reward enough.

Yes! intellectual, like moral excellence, is "blessed in its deed." Its happiness is in its own happy energies, and not in any ulterior object. By the care it diverts, and by the hourly entertainment it supplies, it has happiness in itself, without depending on the adventitious aids of riches or of honours. And yet authors, it seems, will never cease to complain that they cannot calculate on an independence also—that they cannot create a demand, and fix the marketable value of whatever they are pleased to write.

To omit the testimony borne by Horace and by Juvenal to the precarious patronage of authors in ancient Rome, the literary world has had some four centuries of experience in every country in Europe, quite enough to assure them of this very obvious fact: that it is a calculation in defiance of experience to assume that a full-grown man can, in any sense, be "fed by a quill."

What! is not an immortal poem like Milton's beyond all price? Granted—but the said price or value is of two kinds; there is a moral and intellectual worth, or an intrinsic value; and there

is a representative, a fictitious, and a money value also. Untold thousands were wanting to recompense Milton for his influence on society. But since

> "The worth of anything
> Is just as much as it will bring,"

the ten pounds paid for the *Paradise Lost* is as much as a publisher could be expected to risk on anything as unsaleable as a long epic poem. "Why," said Lord Jeffrey, "a man would as soon think of sitting down to a whole ox as a whole epic in those days!"

"The work you offer us is poetry, I think," said a noted publisher in Paternoster Row. "Now poetry, sir, is a drug—a complete drug." "Why!" said the astonished author, "I heard that even a cookery-book has made a fortune; ay, and a trumpery spelling-book." "True, sir, true! Now you are coming to a business-like view of things. Everybody wants cookery; every mother wants a primer; but as to poetry, not one in ten thousand past the age of being love-sick would give thank-ye for it: though in the form of Valentines there is a lively demand, I allow."

When once an author's name is up, publishers can calculate on a certain sale, so they not uncommonly suggest the very hour at which the poet's

inspiration should begin, the very mould for his thoughts, and the name of the song that his muse shall sing; so we find Thomas Moore saying, that a publisher has been to breakfast with him—full of impatience and ardour for something of his to publish—a light Eastern tale, in three volumes. Scene, Circassia. Events founded on the struggle of that people against Russia, and price 1500*l.*, with two-thirds of the copyright his own.

Now really, after reading this, we should think that no ladies were so obliging and tractable as the Muses. We could not expect more of them if they were not songsters, but milliners with an order for a fine dress of certain hue and colour, and not to exceed a certain price. There is a tradition that Shakespeare did write to order—the order of Queen Elizabeth—the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, to show her majesty Falstaff under the influence of the tender passion. But the truth of this is very doubtful. It is also said that Hogarth was requested to paint scenes of a Happy Marriage, to qualify the unpleasant feelings caused in some breasts by his "Mariage à la Mode;" while Richardson disobliged a religious lady, who had been reading *Pamela*, because he would not describe Lovelace converted by a "Doctor Christian."

Publishers ought to be plain matter-of-fact

men to succeed in their literary speculations. The question is, not whether a publication is good or bad, but whether it will move off their shelves or remain on them, and their proper calculation is one of this kind, in which we once assisted :—

If Man, Midwife, and Co. sold two thousand copies of the "Cat and the Fiddle" turned into Greek Iambics by the Cambridge men, how many editions may we expect of the "Old Woman who lived in her Shoe," done into Latin Elegiacs by the emulous Oxonians?

Now, we should not suspect Poetry in Paternoster Row, however much we might have associations of Piety with Amen Corner; still it is a fact, that publishers do grow sanguine, being fired by the poetic *furor* of their authors—yes, *their* authors! —"Some of papa's authors are coming to dinner," said a young lady we could name—and Moore says, that some much-esteemed friends of his he was really obliged to repress in their "gay soarings," for fear of too many copies in one edition.

Publishers now-a-days employ critical readers, but this is only to report as to the execution of a work: whether the subject will command a sale, they can judge better for themselves. But for the most part, in the last century, every publisher was his own critic. We cannot, therefore, be surprised

to hear that some of the best works went begging from publisher to publisher. Prideaux's *Connection between the Old and New Testament*, Mrs. Thompson reminds us, was bandied from hand to hand between five or six booksellers for two years. By one publisher the author was gravely told that the subject was too dry: it should be "enlivened by a little humour." *Robinson Crusoe* was refused by many publishers. *Tristram Shandy* was rejected as dear at fifty pounds. Blair's *Sermons* and Burn's *Justice*, valuable copyrights both, with difficulty found a publisher.

Fielding was on the point of taking 25*l.* for his *Tom Jones*, when Andrew Millar surprised him almost out of his senses by offering 200*l.* And yet very easy and trifling work. When an author's name is established he has earned as much, or more. For instance, Goldsmith received for his *Selections of English Poetry*, 200*l.* For this he did nothing but mark passages with a red-lead pencil; but then he used to add, with much gravity, "A man shows his judgment in these selections, and a man may be twenty years of his life cultivating that judgment."

When Sir Walter Scott's embarrassments were first known, after the failure of Constable's house, a distinguished character remarked, "What! Scott

ruined! Impossible! Why, if every one who has been entertained by his charming novels would only subscribe sixpence, he would be as rich as Rothschild."—But the fact was, that the thousands whose firesides Sir Walter had surrounded with such charming circles of imaginary acquaintance—the tens of thousands whose weary hours this great enchanter had beguiled "from Russia's snows to Persia's arid sands"—they did not subscribe their sixpences, and Sir Walter had the immortal honour of wiping off some 8000*l.* of his debt by *Woodstock*, and some 18,000*l.* by his *Life of Napoleon*, among other liquidations—the unassisted efforts of his own right hand. One anonymous friend did offer 30,000*l.* in the time of Sir Walter's utmost need; but this was honourably refused.

Still, Sir Walter Scott is not to be instanced as a case of literary merit unrewarded. And why? Some will answer, because his genius was so transcendent. Say, rather, because that genius was so well directed—because, in his literary merchandise, he so nicely adapted the supply to the demand. And this is the secret of all mercantile success: and literature, we must remember, when in the hands of the trade, is a matter purely mercantile. The man of literature is purely such only so long as he studies for his own amusement,

enjoying the resources of his own cultivated mind. The moment he turns author he enters trade, and must observe the principles of trade, if he hopes to prosper. Authors rarely make good tradesmen—indeed they rarely have the qualifications. They can bring to market one kind of commodity, and one only—some can bring poetry; some history; some philosophy. Of all such subjects the purchasers are very few, and the manufacturers very many. And all markets are decided by this—not whether things are essentially good, but whether they are positively wanted — wanted, above all, not by the next generation, but by the generation present.

Men of genius, proverbially, are in advance of their age—they write for posterity—they suppose an improved taste, and on that improvement also their due appreciation entirely depends. Some one said to the late Lord Holland that poets do not observe Horace's advice, of keeping their works for nine years of reflection and emendation before they publish. "Of course not," said his lordship, "for who is to pay the interest?"—Equally true is it that authors who write for the next generation must not expect to be paid by this.

Authors, therefore, like all others who compete in the market, must consider the demand. To offer

poetical works to unpoetical people is like a venture of warming-pans to the West Indies; and poor Haydon had lived years enough in this world to know that a "learned pig" would attract far more shillings than a learned man. Goldsmith was early taught this truth. "The poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling" must be fixed at last on useful objects; "his airy nothings" must not disdain "a local habitation and a name" in this world of week-days, and working-days, and stern realities, seeing it is not by the ecstasy of the heart, nor by the joys of the mind, nor by "the feast of reason" or "the flow of soul," but "by the *sweat of thy face* shalt thou eat bread."

Goldsmith said of Gray, "We cannot without regret behold talents capable of giving pleasure to all exerted in efforts that, at best, can amuse only the few; we cannot behold this rising poet seeking fame among the learned, without hinting to him the advice that Isocrates used to give his pupils—*Study the people.*"

There is a delightful story of the good common sense of Sir Walter Scott—that sense that Lord Jeffrey thought not the least extraordinary part of Sir Walter Scott's character—exemplified in the advice he gave a clever youth, who, impatient of the useful calling of the printing-office, aspired to the

honour of "setting up the type" of his own imagination upon canvas.

Sir Walter kindly explained the difficulties and the perils of an artist's life, the almost certain distresses, and the narrow chances. He described the hundreds of noble spirits who pine out their lives in solitary garrets, lamenting the choice of a career in which success of any sort is rare, and no success but the highest worth attaining: "If you feel within you such a glow of ambition, that you would rather run a hundred chances of obscurity and penury than miss one of being a Wilkie, make up your mind, and take the bold plunge; but, if your object is merely worldly comfort and independence—to be a respectable citizen, with your own snug roof over your head, and the happy faces of a wife and children about you—pause and reflect well." And then Sir Walter very sensibly proceeded to explain, that profit is annexed to departments of obvious and direct utility, and "some clever fellow might make a good hit if, in place of enrolling himself among the Rafaelles and Vandykes of the Royal Academy, he should set himself resolutely to introduce something of a more elegant style of house-painting.

These words of Sir Walter, spoken five-and-thirty years ago, were prophetic. Now, house-

decorations keep from starvation much second-rate talent, and not a little first-rate talent too.

This suggests a new interpretation of "*Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*," as, indeed, is further illustrated by the following anecdote of Lord Byron. "An Italian lady, hearing from Byron the great fame of Sir Humphry Davy, asked, 'But what can this great chemist do?' 'Almost anything,' said Byron. 'Oh! then, *mio caro*, do pray beg him to give me something to die my eyebrows black. I have tried a thousand colours, but they all come off; and, besides, can't he invent something to make them grow?'"

Men of learning were far more at a loss for encouragement in the days of Johnson and Goldsmith than at present. The number of educated readers was much less, the expense of publishing much greater—the opportunities of advertising and the intercourse of country booksellers with the metropolis were so limited, that authors had comparatively little chance of making their merits known beyond a narrow circle.

Works in periodical numbers, like the *Rambler* and the *Monthly Review*, constituted the ordinary employment offered by the booksellers; more serious works could rarely be undertaken without that kind of patronage, the very tardy offer of which called

forth Dr. Johnson's scornful reply in his memorable letter to Lord Chesterfield. But this state of things had a parallel in the literary annals of ancient Rome. For, at Rome, there existed a curious substitute for print, and paper, and all the machinery of publication. The letters of the younger Pliny convey a lively picture of those public recitations to which, as the only means of publicity, authors used to invite their friends. Pliny describes the reluctant attendance—the complimentary lounging in, long enough to show themselves, like modern beaux with three balls of an evening. Authors who aspired to any more substantial reward than fame alone depended on precarious preferment from some influential patron.

Goldsmith said—"There is a strong similitude between the lives of almost all our English poets. The Ordinary of Newgate, we are told, has but one story, which serves for the life of every hero that happens to come within the circle of his pastoral care; and, however unworthy the resemblance appears, it may be asserted that the history of one poet might serve, with a little variation, for that of any other. Born of creditable parents, who gave him a pious education—in spite of all their endeavours, in spite of all the exhortations of the minister of the parish on Sundays, he turned

his mind from following good things, and fell to—writing verses."

Goldsmith remembered that Fielding had died of shattered hope and fortune; Collins, poor and mad, was sinking into the grave; Smollett fighting with adversity for his daily bread; and Johnson and Savage wandering supperless about the streets.

Smollett we find loudly crying out against the indifference of his friends, who, he said, should have ingenuously told him what he had to expect in the capacity of an author, when he first professed himself of that honourable fraternity:—"I should, in all probability, have spared myself the incredible labour and chagrin I have since undergone."

Edmund Burke writes from London to his Irish friends:—"I don't think there is much respect paid to a man of letters on this side of the water—genius is not patronised by any of the nobility—writers of the first talents are left to the capricious patronage of the public." He thought a man would make more money by "figures of arithmetic" than by "figures of rhetoric." And no wonder. The calculations of Cocker are far more available than those of Newton. Every man wants to cast up a butcher's bill—very few care for the number of the stars. For one man who is concerned with the heavens above, ten thousand are

concerned with the earth beneath. And it is a fact that Carpenter's Spelling Book, and Mrs. Glass's *Gas*tronomy, or Cookery Book, are far more valuable, as copyrights, than the *Principia* of Newton, or the *As*tronomy of Herschel. "Of copyrights," Southey said, "the *Cookery Book* would be most valuable of any;" and in his recollection, Blair's *Sermons*, Tuplin's *Farriery*, Burn's *Justice*, and Murray's *English Grammar*, were among the most profitable of all literary speculations.

Goldsmith, it is believed—Washington Irving says, "with great probability"—wrote the famous nursery tale of *Goody Two Shoes;* for that tale was published by Mr. Newbery in 1765; at which date Goldsmith was writing for Newbery all kinds of odds and ends, being much in want of money.

Just at the time of Burke and Johnson, genius had become too common, or great men too indifferent, for much encouragement to be derived from patronage. Besides, how are you to patronise an author? To maintain him at your own cost is, of course, not like human nature. To subscribe for copies of his works, and to invite him to your table, will go but a short way to provide bed and board—at the rate of three meals a-day three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. The sun

of patronage must one day cease to shine, and then the poet's crops must cease to grow. No — nothing will maintain a man like constant employment with reasonable pay — and constant employment involves a constant demand on the part of the public, and a constant power of supply on the part of the author. And how do such terms as Genius and Constant Supply assort together? Genius depends on the suggestions of the occasion; and the inspiration of the hour. Its free spirit flies before the threats of the taskmaster, imperious necessity and want. It must work leisurely and happy, or not at all. Gain may naturally be the consequence, but it can rarely, without prejudice, become the motive of genius.

Poor Campbell, in the dearest time of the war, had himself and wife, and also his mother, three heavy bodies, to be supported by one single feather! With other employments necessity stimulates exertion, but in literature it paralyses and distracts.

Hear the poor author's pathetic recountal: — "My anxiety to wake in the morning, in order to be at my literary labours, kept me awake all night. Any attempt at original composition was, at this time, quite out of the question. But the wolf was at the door; and besides the current expenses of

our common maintenance, I had quarterly payment of usurious interest on a debt for our new furniture, and for the very cradle that rocked our first-born child—a Judaic loan—40*l.* a-year for the use of 200*l.*! ! Throbbing as my temples were, after sleepless and anxious nights, I was obliged next day to work at such literary labour as I could undertake—mere compilation and common-place thought, which required little more than the pen."

To obtain immediate popularity, an author must address himself to the majority of the public —and the vulgar will always be the majority— and upon them the finer delineations of character and of human feeling are lost. We must cater often for inferior taste.—"Delicate wines must be brandied for the English market."

And here we may observe that Bishop Hurd— whose *Life* and *Common-place Book* has lately been published by our friend the Rev. F. Kilvert, author of *Literary Remains of Bishop Warburton*—evinced a singular power of prediction as regards the affected and stilted style, and that striving after originality, which characterises much of the writing of the present day. He said,—

"When a language, as ours at this time (about 1780), hath been much polished and enriched with

perfect models of style in almost every way, it is in the order of things that the next step should be a *vicious affectation.* For, the simplicity of true taste under these circumstances grows insipid: something better than the best must be aimed at, and the reader's languid appetite raised by the provocatives of an ambitious refinement."

Authors often submit to be guided by the trade-notions of their publishers. For instance: Moore, while revising the *Loves of the Angels* for a new edition, proposed to his publishers to make the "Angels" completely Eastern, and thus avoid that association with Scripture which they feared would, in the long run, "be a drag on the popularity of the poem."—Moore was answered, "Your idea is the very thing," with every encouragement to follow it up.

Also, Byron tells Murray that his predecessor advised Dr. Prideaux to put some more *humour* into his *Life of Mahomet.*

A certain firm in Paternoster Row, deriving its cognomen apparently from Artaxerxes Longimanus, suggested to Moore, in 1820, "to work up" a certain "volume without the politics, or to entice his Muse into some other region."

Sir Walter Scott would have called *Kenilworth* "Cumnor Hall," but adopted *Kenilworth* in compli-

ance with the wishes of Constable, whose vanity was so great, that he used to stalk up and down his room, and exclaim, "I am all but the author of the *Waverley Novels!*" But Constable had considerable bibliographical knowledge.

Constable decided the name of *Rob Roy;* Scott remonstrated, "What, Mr. Accoucheur! must you be setting up for Mr. Sponsor, too?"

Dr. Johnson might enjoy his own intellectual prowess, as exemplified in his play of *Irene*, without any to dictate or to interfere; but, when he proposed to bring that play on to the stage he was in a very different position — Garrick understood that part best: alterations that might be the spoiling of the poetry might still be the making of the play; and it was all in vain that the Doctor, indignant at sacrificing fine parts to mere stage effect, remonstrated, "Why, the man would spoil my tragedy that he may kick his heels!"

CHAPTER XV.

POETRY, WHY "A DRUG"—LORD JEFFREY ON ITS SUPERABUNDANCE—BOOKS FOR THE MILLION—AUTHORS WANTING LIBRARIES IN LAST CENTURY—PEEL'S LETTER TO SOUTHEY—AUTHORS PAID BY SECRET-SERVICE MONEY—NOBLE REPLY OF GOLDSMITH.

As regards the Profits of Poetry, a hundred years ago a bookseller said, that Poetry was a drug—a complaint which has been often repeated in Paternoster Row.

"*Paternoster!*" cries some poor wretch; "it should be *Noverca* Row," as evincing more of the proverbial heartlessness of a Stepmother than the tender feeling of a true parent—"it is not a *living* a man can earn there; it is a *starving*." True, true; but the Row is no more answerable for the price of literature than Leadenhall Market is answerable for the price of provisions—more sellers

than buyers will ever cause, with the food of the mind as the food of the body, "a glut" in the market; or, in other words, "Poetry" will become, as so often said, "a drug;" for, such was also the reply to the authors of the *Rejected Addresses* by the publisher to whom they first offered those very clever imitations.

Now Poetry is a commodity which very naturally becomes a drug: first, because a little goes a long way; and, secondly, because — *ut pictura poesis* — it is with a poem as with a picture; and the face of Dame Nature has been drawn so often — so frequently has the old lady sat for her likeness, in every mood and every humour — under every hue of her ever-varying complexion — sometimes attired in her new Spring fashions — sometimes in the butterfly robes of Summer — sometimes in the sober and Quaker-like garb of Autumn — and sometimes in the white plumes or widow-weeds of Winter — that it is very hard to make the old lady look fresh or interesting any more. Modern poets find the old ideas all used up. Great men have the same ideas; but you cannot expect a profitable monopoly of sentiments as old as the hills.

To certain philosophers it may appear

> "*That* beauty needs not th' aid of ornament,
> But is, when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

but ladies are too wise in their generation to forswear feathers and finery for all that. There is the same difference between Homer's *Iliad* and Pope's *Iliad* that there is between the majestic simplicity of the Parthenon and the intricate tracery of Westminster Abbey — or between the native grace of the Apollo Belvidere and the artificial humanity of Roubilliac's Voltaire at the British Museum. We need not ask whether another Homer or another Phidias would be appreciated now. For, should either of these great men re-appear, their minds would no more assume the same cast or the same simple form of expression amidst all the modern influences of steam-engines, railways, and *Times* newspapers, than they would learn to speak the languages of ancient Athens in the thoroughfare between Paddington and the Bank.

For all these reasons, the demand for New Poetry is naturally very limited. The old poets have survived all the changes of time and the caprice of fashion. What is true to nature is true always — "heart answereth to heart" — poetry in harmony with the hearts of our fathers will touch the same chords in our own. Besides, Milton and Shakespeare must be read, if not as a pleasure, as a duty — but no one is ashamed of not having cultivated the acquaintance of new aspirants — and,

perhaps, another poet is silently regarded as a very qualified blessing to the literary world.

But not only is the demand for Poetry too small to admit of a high remuneration, and pay for wife, and child, and nurse, and cradle, but the supply is also very large. We have already alluded to Lord Jeffrey's estimate of ten thousand lines a-year. Moore and Scott were of the same opinion: for, when Thomas Moore was visiting Sir Walter Scott, the abundance of poetic talent was alluded to. "Hardly is a magazine now published," said Moore, "that does not contain verses which, some thirty years ago, would have made a reputation." Scott turned with a look of shrewd humour, as if chuckling over his own success, and said, "Well, we were in the luck of it to come before these fellows; we have, like Bobadil, taught them to beat us with our own weapons." Says Moore, "He seemed to think that a rising poet can alone hope for success in complete novelty." So, Southey said, thirty years ago, "Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author."

This reminds us of a difficulty which occurred to Lord Jeffrey.—Ten thousand lines of good

Poetry, he said, are annually added to our store. Then, how will future generations keep up with this rapid march of letters? They will want Extracts and Digests — Pioneers to clear, as well as to mark out, the path of learning. And this mode of smoothing away difficulty will be the more justifiable if we think with Byron, that "no poetry is all good." Where is the Poetry of which one-half is good? "Is it *The Æneid?* Is it Milton's? Is it Dryden's? Is it any one's, except Pope's and Goldsmith's, of which all is good?" We can only expect it should be good by fits and starts. Just as Dr. Johnson said of Milton, some parts must be written only for the sake of the rest — a Palace must have passages as well as State-rooms. Indeed, an octavo full of poetry all on one subject, is like painting by the acre — inconsistent at once with the nature of the art and the powers of mortal man. "No *young* man," said Southey, "can *possibly* write a good narrative poem. I, myself, published one at the age of twenty-one — but it is full of incorrect language and errors of every kind."

Doctor Johnson had observed, fifty years before, that it was difficult to get literary fame, and that it was every day becoming more difficult. In this he only agreed with a remark by Goldsmith, that Pope and others had taken up all the places, and, there-

fore, his *Traveller* could hardly find room for poetical distinction. But, happily, there is a better demand for literature now. Happily there is more general appreciation of the beauties of literature than in earlier days; when (in 1805) Southey said he knew a Liverpool merchant who ordered his bookseller to send him Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope! and, if any of those fellows should publish anything new, to let him have it immediately!

Had Lord Holland heard this, he would have seen additional grounds for his observation to Moore, that books were more an article of furniture in those days — though they used to be bought only for use. But now, we may be almost said to read by steam. Witness the *Railway Library* — books published to be read at the rate of a mile a minute by the Great Western Express — "So cheap, sir," said Mr. the *Stationer*; "they are often left in the carriages." This reminds us of seeing the celebrated publisher, Talboys, "making good for trade" by tearing out and throwing away the leaves of a German book as fast as he read them, remarking, "What can a man want with a book when he has once got the contents in his head?"

The great Scotch publisher, Constable, in 1825, told Scott that he "had hitherto been thinking only of the wax-lights," but he should soon "have his

hand on the tallow." He would distribute "twelve volumes a-year, at a halfpenny profit—so cheap that every butcher's callant may have them, if he pleases to let me tax him sixpence a-week." Sir Walter told him, doubtless he would prove "The Grand Napoleon of the realms of *Print*."—This conversation was realised in the famous *Constable's Miscellany*, and the cheap literature which followed in its train.

Messrs. Chambers have found that the great difficulty in reaching the poorer classes is not in the price—for, this the three-halfpenny sheets have overcome — but in the machinery of distribution. The poor do not lounge about booksellers' shops; so, cheap literature wants a travelling bookseller in the back streets, and a literary corner of the chandler's shop. Before this enterprise of Constable, Scott once said he had a rich valley crowded with handsome houses under his view, and yet he doubted whether any laird within ten miles spent ten pounds a-year on new books. "No," said Constable, "there is no market among them that is worth our thinking about. They are contented with a Review or a Magazine, or a subscription to some circulating library forty miles off."

With all the cheap literature and the increased demand thus originated, and all this railway con-

sumption, compare the very limited catalogue of a gentleman's library in the seventeenth century, as given by Macaulay.

Lord Macaulay reminds us that, at the beginning of the last century, a bookseller's parcel from Paternoster Row to Devonshire would be as long on its travels as it is now in reaching Kentucky. Few knights of the shire had a library sufficient for a modern servants' hall. And an esquire passed for a great scholar, if *Hudibras* and *Baker's Chronicle, Tarlton's Jests,* and the *Seven Champions of Christendom,* lay in his hall-window, among the fishing-rods and fowling-pieces.

And this will naturally suggest the question as to how the old divines contrived to amass such well-digested knowledge.—These learned men will almost invariably be found connected with towns. Had Hooker been always condemned to watch his sheepfold, and rock the cradle for a wife who tried the depths of his Christian patience, he never could have written his *Ecclesiastical Polity.* Bishop Bull was rich enough to collect a library of his own; but Pearson, Barrow, Cudworth, and More lived at Cambridge; South, Pococke, and others, at Oxford: while Tillotson, Sherlock, Burnet, Stillingfleet, Beveridge, and the greater part of our eminent writers, held preferment in London.

We may catch a glimpse of the female education of the last century, by Goldsmith's enumeration of such fashionable topics as "pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the Musical Glasses." Olivia Primrose appears a representative of a class, and she had read Thwackum and Square's dispute in *Tom Jones*, the argument of Man Friday and his Master in *Robinson Crusoe*, and the Dialogues in *Religious Courtship!*

But, to speak again of the emoluments of literary men in the last century, it is true that, in the days of Horace Walpole, certain authors were rewarded by preferment and drafts on the Secret-Service Fund. Still, such pay or pension could not be deemed as a reward for their genius—not as "the cheap defence of nations"—not because "an author may be considered as a merciful substitute for the legislature"—no; but, in the most narrow sense, for their immediate use and service; and, as with the meanest mechanic—for a given piece of work, and that not always of the most honourable character. For the Author, as such, there was no respect. Horace Walpole even could express surprise that "so sensible a man as young Mr. Burke had not worn off his authorism yet."

Sir Robert Peel wrote to Robert Southey, announcing his intention to assist him in any way

that lay within the sphere of his influence, expressly because "a pension or preferment was due to one whose writings had done so much for the cause of religion and public morals."

And we cannot help observing, that proud indeed must have been that moment in Southey's life which enabled him to realise his own humble hope and consciousness that he had lived to do some substantial good in this world. How unlike "that cowardly infidel," as Dr. Johnson expressed it, "who left a vile piece of scepticism to be published, like a blunderbuss ready loaded to be discharged by the hand of another, after his death!"—How unlike Byron, who left a hateful legacy of mental and moral poison to fill the minds of youth with discontent, and fire their passions with incentives from generation to generation!

This letter from Sir Robert, and the life of usefulness it certified, exemplified the true and legitimate rewards of literature! It virtually tells the Author that he is *blessed in his deed*—that his deeds carry their own reward—that his is the noblest satisfaction *in the life that now is*—and, that the pension that is offered is merely a test and an evidence of his usefulness, and not what a pension used to be when Dr. Johnson defined

it as "pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country."

Yes, the author of a book of genial and wholesome influence—books like Sir Walter Scott's, that draw the youthful mind so surely, though insensibly, to virtue's side—books from which we rise in peace and charity with all the world, ready to discern the "soul of goodness in things evil," or to read "sermons in stones and good in everything"—such an author has indeed, in the satisfaction he must feel, the richest of all rewards; for, since it is the blessing of all works of goodness and of mercy that they shall be multiplied and shown unto thousands of generations—unbounded is the good that one wholesome book may do.

Dumbiedikes, in Sir W. Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, left a piece of worldly wisdom for Jock and Nichil Novit,—"When ye hae naething else to do, ye may be aye sticking in a tree: *it will be growing*, Jock, when ye're sleeping." And every Author is in duty bound to consider whether the "tree he is sticking in," or the seed he is sowing, will bear good fruit for ages to come, or whether—too horrible to think of—it will be as tares in his neighbour's corn, or thorns and thistles to strew the

already rugged path of life. It is a kind thing to set up a bridge over a dangerous chasm, or a hand-post to guide the weary traveller; but woe to him who, by unsettling and confounding the bounds of right and wrong, removes, in the worst sense, his neighbour's landmark; woe be to him who, by setting up false finger-posts, makes the weary go out of the straight but narrow way.

To return to the subject of Ministerial Patronage. Even this formed no exception to the rule, that for literature to be lucrative, it must meet an immediate demand. It was worth while to give Prior an Embassy, and Addison a Secretaryship—albeit, Addison's pen proved somewhat too tasteful and dainty in the choice of words for the despatch of public business. Steele, Congreve, and Swift, also wielded pens serviceable for "the hour and the man," and the minister looked no further. But this prostitution of the muse—this practice of literary mercenaries, ready to serve under friend or foe—drew contempt upon authorship, till a man of letters implied not more talent, though less honesty, than the penny-a-liners of the present day. Mr. Foster observes, that "though no less than 50,000*l.* was the sum that the Secret Committee found to have been expended by Walpole's Ministry on daily scribblers for their daily

bread; still, not a sixpence was received by a writer whose name is enviably known. All went to the Guthries, the Amhersts, the Arnalls, the Ralphs, and the Oldmixons. No one knows the name of Cook, yet he was pensioned; whereas a Fielding solicited Walpole's aid in vain."

And how refreshing is it to think that Genius could sometimes vindicate its own freedom—could nobly spurn the wages of the hireling, and prove a true and constant lover of the Muses, rather for their charms than for their fortune! For, once it was resolved that an overture should be made to Goldsmith to become a pamphleteer in the service of Lord North's administration—some counterpoise being wanted to the powerful pens of Junius and of Wilkes. Dr. Scott, chaplain to Lord Sandwich, was deputed to negotiate. "I found him," said he, "in a miserable suit of chambers in the Temple. I told him my authority. I told how I was empowered to pay most liberally for his exertions; and, would you believe it? he was so absurd as to say,' 'I can earn as much as will supply my wants without writing for any party; the assistance you offer is, therefore, unnecessary to me:' and so I left him in his garret!"

Left him, indeed! and well such a creature might—even as certain birds of ill omen must

cower and blink before the light. Fancy such a picture of true nobility gnawing its honest crust in a garret, yet scorning the wages of unrighteousness! and, if any foil were wanting to throw out this picture into bold relief, Dr. Scott—however worthless are such creatures to the eye of man—has answered one useful purpose, at all events, in the scheme of Providence. Thus, does it appear that, by the Wisdom of Providence—the vilest refuse of the Moral, as of the Physical world, may all be turned to good account. For, as *the Wicked are* God's *sword,* and *reserved* as instruments *for the day of evil;* so do inferior natures serve to darken the background, and show forth true and righteous dealing in all its native lustre. Goldsmith had many faults; but it is pleasing to see, ever and anon, a spark of the true fire yet glimmering in his breast.

Among the causes, therefore, that literary "merit so often goes out sighing," are—the difficulties of writing according to the market, as also "the drug" or glut of the market, from the abundant supply of compositions of every kind, of poetry especially—and also the absence of all patronage or gratuitous maintenance for men of genius, either from individuals or from the state. The endowments of our universities and fellow-

ships are an exception: but demand and supply, for the most part, rule the market of literature; and Lord Macaulay ably argued, that this was the most healthy state of things upon this balance.

Fanny Kemble admitted that it was not among the least of the excitements in an actor's life, that there was no other position in which you compete for renown, where well-merited applause is paid in such ready coin—at the very instant the applause is earned, vehemently and enthusiastically, to your face. Who is there but must sympathise with that talented lady (now Mrs. Butler), when she acknowledges that she does love to see her dear countrymen and countrywomen stand up, with the waving of handkerchiefs, bouquets thrown upon the stage, and thunders of most rapturous applause, as the truthful enunciation of some of Shakespeare's immortal lines has found their way home to their very hearts. And then, Mrs. Butler remarks that poets, and painters, and sculptors, and others who appeal to the feelings of men, may live and die, not only without thanks for the pleasure they have given, and without acknowledgment of their genius, but even without the satisfaction of knowing that they have not been merely beating the air or speaking to the wind.

The Baron of Bradwardine is made wittily to paraphrase the well-known lines of Homer,—

> "One half his prayer with Phœbus grace did find,
> The other half he whistled down the wind."

But it is long, indeed, before the author—with his first essay, at all events—knows that his patron saint has heard "half," or even one word of his effusion. It may be all "whistled down the wind" for anything the author knows. For, Dr. Johnson said the difficulty in writing verses was in knowing when we had written good ones. So Byron, for his comparatively inferior *Imitations of Horace*, expected far more credit than for his *Childe Harold*—the very foundation of his fame.

Truly, this is a discouraging state of things: an author's chief reward is fame, and that so often posthumous! He may draw bills which posterity will honour, but which still the generation present will not discount! Without a reputation, the author cannot live, and by the time he has earned a reputation it is often time to die!

Then why do authors write? Ask, Why do roses "waste their sweetness on the desert air?" Why do young lambs frisk about the meadows? Why does the peacock spread its richly-painted tail, or the lark soar, warbling to its viewless

height? All—each in its kind—obey their several instincts. Providence provides some secret springs of action. It is easier for the turnspit dog to turn his cage than to stand still; and, when a stronger motive is wanting to stimulate the man of genius, poverty often serves, even as the hot coal which the purloiner of perquisites ingeniously applies, serves to quicken Master Doggie's movements.

A certain inward impulse secures for society the blessing that "truth will out." Besides the *cacoëthes scribendi*—that is, an unhealthy appetite, and a morbid passion for mere scribbling—some natures are gifted with a healthy inclination also. Providence takes care that the ocean of life shall not grow stagnant, and among one of its kindly provisions it makes man "fly from *ennui*," as Horace says man flies from poverty, over land and sea—"finding it far more repugnant to his nature to be eaten up by rust," as Shakespeare says, "than to be scoured to pieces by perpetual motion." In one word, authors write, as the immortal Isaac Watts taught us in our nursery lessons, because

"It is their nature *to*."

"I find," says Keats, "I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal poetry. I began with a

little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. I had become all of a tremble from not having written anything of late. The sonnet (enclosed) did me good; I slept the better last night for it. This morning, however, I am nearly as bad again. Just now I opened Spenser, and the first lines I saw were these:—

> 'The noble heart that harbours virtuous thought,
> And is with child of glorious great intent,
> Can never rest, until it forth have brought
> Th' eternal brood of glory excellent.'"

"Idleness of mind," says Burton, "is the nurse of naughtiness, the stepmother of discipline, the cushion on which the Devil reposes, and a great cause of melancholy."

Jeffrey said he longed for rural retirement, to be with his friends among the roses and the beeches. And then he asks himself, Why should I vex my worn and shattered frame with toils and efforts, and disturb the last sands in my hour-glass with the shaking of a foolish ambition? Why, indeed? Why does nobody do what is most conducive to their happiness? Or, rather, why are we all framed and moulded into such artificial creatures as to require the excitement of habitual exertions, and

the dream of ideal importance, to keep us out of *ennui* and despondency, and a stealing torpor and depressing feeling of insignificance?

And these incitements to exertion—this mental stimulus—is not to be depreciated, as below the dignity of human nature: because, it has been truly said that one of the ways in which life becomes tolerable is through simple illusion—shadows to hunt, and even substances which collapse into shadows when caught—the illusion of Hope, and the no less childish belief that we can fill up yearnings or aching voids which after all are deeply seated in ourselves.

"Who would live his own life over again?" says the moralist; thinking himself very wise, as if he had adduced a striking proof that life is not worth living for. Why, who would see the same play over again? Who would eat the same meal over again, when the interest or the appetite has passed away? Whether happiness is made up of hope, as sweetmeats are made of sugar, does not alter the case; the proverb still is true as ever—*Quid refert dum felix sis?* "What does it matter, whilst you are happy?" So we agree with the remark, that if we make all men philosophers, that is, teach men from the earliest entrance on life to regard things

for what they are, you cut the sinews of all human industry. We are made happy by *shadows* here: the *substance* is to be sought in other regions.

In speaking on this subject, Lord Jeffrey remarks, with much good sense — "It is something of this kind with all of us, and we magnify it into a notion of duty, and a pretence of being useful in our generation!" Nature evidently intends man shall keep moving — so, partly by inward cravings, and partly by inducements, toys, and some *ignis fatuus* from without, it comes to pass that the horse is kept going right up to the stable-door.

The rocking of the cradle, and our infant energies in the go-cart, all form and confirm the same restless habit, till mortal man often sketches out designs of usefulness enough for his own mortal span, and enough to bewilder his heirs, executors, or administrators after him.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAMPBELL'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS — KIRKE WHITE — LITERATURE NOT EVERYTHING — BACON — COWPER'S INFLUENCE ON SLAVERY — POWERS OF GENIUS OFTEN WASTED — ELDON, BURNS, CAMPBELL — LITERATURE A LOSING GAME — COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, SIR H. DAVY.

We have said enough to show that authors, like other men, experience the truth of Aristotle's remark, that "happiness is not in our Objects, but in our Energies"—the pleasure is in the pursuit; and whether we start an old fox or a new idea, the sport only lasts till we have run it down.

Campbell, in his Inaugural Address, speaks of "that devotion to Study, when a man shall wait for a new book, or for new lights of information on any favourite subject, as eagerly as avarice watches the fate of its lottery ticket. Only cherish the nascent principle of curiosity, and that day will come when study, instead of a duty, will become an agreeable habit."

"If," says Kirke White, "polite letters only

cheered the hours of elegant leisure, affording refined and polished pleasures, uncontaminated with gross and sensual gratifications, they would still be valuable; how much more when considered as the handmaids of the virtues, and the correctors as well as the adorners of society!"

Still, as regards Happiness, we must not be exclusively Literary. Man is made not only for Meditation, but for Action:—"To think much and deeply," said Kirke White, "will make any man sad. Lettered and Philosophical Men are often peevish in their tempers and austere in their manners. The happiest condition is found in the middle, with neither exclusively mental nor exclusively bodily employments. A person with a moderate love of reading, and few opportunities of indulging it, would be inclined to envy me, who have nothing to do but to read; but though my studious pleasures are more comprehensive, they are not more exquisite; for an occasional banquet gives more pleasure than a continual feast."

But why seek for more illustrations of the legitimate objects of men of genius, seeing they are so beautifully set forth in the memorable words of Bacon:—

"There is not sought in knowledge a Couch, whereon to rest a searching and a restless spirit; or

a Terrace, for a wandering and a variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a Tower of State, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a Fort and Commanding Ground, for strife and contention; or a *Shop*, for *profit* or *sale;* but, a rich Storehouse, for the Glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's Estate."

The conclusion of all is, that if Men of Literature do not commonly receive adequate rewards, for the most part they write chiefly to please themselves, and do greatly please themselves while they write. Still they pick up crumbs of comfort in their paths. The consciousness of power is truly ennobling; and to feel, in putting forth that power, that we may be exercising a wondrous influence on the world, is sufficient excitement to every generous nature.

Campbell most truly said of Cowper, and his influence in the cause of Wilberforce and of Clarkson —"Society is his debtor. Poetical expositions of the horrors of Slavery may seem unlikely agents to destroy it; and it is possible that the most refined planter in the West Indies may look with neither shame nor compunction on his own image in the pages of Cowper, exposed as a being degraded by giving stripes and tasks to his fellow-creature. But such appeals to the heart of the community are not

lost. They fix themselves silently in the popular memory, and they become at last a part of that public opinion which must, sooner or later, wrest the lash from the oppressor's hand."

The Annals of Literature are graced with one great name of a man of Science, who would not even accept the legitimate earnings of his genius, contented with the satisfaction of usefulness alone: we mean Sir Humphry Davy.

Sir Humphry Davy has, indeed, left on record a memorable instance of disinterested genius; never having taken out a Patent for his invaluable Safety-lamp. The average loss of life by explosion of fire-damp in our collieries for seven years had been nearly at the rate of a life a-week; when the loss of ninety-two lives by one explosion, at the Felling Colliery, in the year 1812, set Sir Humphry Davy analysing the destructive agent of fire-damp, and the conditions for its igniting, till he deduced that the cooling medium of wire-gauze would obviate all danger from the miner's lamp.—"As Sir Humphry Davy was proving the efficacy of his lamp in the autumn of 1815, I observed," said Mr. Buddle, of Newcastle, "'You might as well have secured this invention by a patent, and received your five or ten thousand a-year from it.' The reply of this great and noble-minded man was, 'No, my good friend,

I never thought of such a thing; my sole object was to serve the cause of humanity. I have enough for all my views and purposes; more wealth might distract my attention from my favourite pursuits—more wealth could not increase either my fame or my happiness. It might undoubtedly enable me to put four horses to my carriage; but what would it avail me to have it said that Sir Humphry drives his carriage-and-four?'" No. Men of genius want no titles—put them on and they soon drop off—*Sir* Isaac is an impertinence to our idea of Newton. Men care little to compete with equipage or money who are conscious of the riches of mind. Davy's only reward was the thanks of his friends, conveyed with a service of plate representing a subscription of 1500*l.*

Dr. Chalmers regrets that no public endowments saved Sir Isaac Newton from being Master and Worker of the Mint, or Adam Smith from being Commissioner of Customs, or Henry Mackenzie from the office of Comptroller of the Tax Office, for such was the drudgery of their lives: while Wordsworth was an Agent for Stamps in the county of Westmorland, and Dugald Stewart Recorder of Prices in the *Edinburgh Gazette*, and, lastly, Sir Walter Scott a Clerk to the Court of Session.—Dr. Chalmers might have added that Burns was an

exciseman, and that Campbell at one time was obliged to toil at mere compilation and abridgement, as more immediately lucrative than the exercise of his original genius.

Lord Eldon was about to be apprenticed to a coal-fitter, when the affection of his brother William, who had been raised by his talents to a tutorship at University College, caused him to be sent to Oxford. But the future Lord Stowell's work was not complete: having rescued the great Chancellor from selling coals, another act of self-sacrifice was required to save him from raisins and figs; for Eldon, in the difficulties involved by his marriage, was on the point of joining a friend in the grocery trade. But even this is nothing compared to the fate that threatened Robert Burns, for he had actually arranged to turn overseer—in honest English, Slave-driver, in Jamaica, when he was made a gauger in the Excise; in which office, such were the temptations to drink, that he says he often gave his friends a slice of his constitution.

"Talking of Poets," said Lord Jeffrey, "I have a desponding epistle from poor Campbell, in which he says that his health is bad, and that his spirits are worn down by working all day in a newspaper office." Jeffrey says also of Burns,—"What touches me most is the pitiable poverty in which that gifted

being passed his early days, and how small a share of the useless luxuries in which we indulge would have sufficed to shed joy and cheerfulness in his dwellings. I could lie down in the dirt, and cry and grovel there, I think, for a century, to save such a soul as Burns from the suffering, and the contamination, and the *degradation* which these same arrangements imposed upon him." The allusion is to the habits inseparable from the life of a gauger, for, said Burns—"I had often to indulge my company with a slice of my constitution."

Numerous opinions might be added to prove that Literature, considered as a Profession, is the most precarious of all — precarious at best, even to men endowed with the most prolific talent. In the very interesting *Life of Robert Southey*, along with the letter from Sir Robert Peel before mentioned, very delicately offering such patronage as his high position commanded — there will also be found a very candid and a very explicit reply from Southey, in which he has left on record interesting evidence as to the poor emoluments of a literary life.

The conclusion which Southey's very valuable letter of discovery enables us to draw is this, — that a writer even of the greatest versatility of talent — whose Poetry was of a very high order, and whose Prose even the offended Byron pro-

nounced "perfect"—a writer who could take advantage of the state of the Literary Market, by making sure of a hundred pounds each for four articles a-year contributed to the *Quarterly Review*, —that even so rare a combination of literary and practical talent as this could only earn enough for the day, without laying by anything on which to fall back in case of sickness, still less to make any adequate provision for his family in case of death!

Southey's experience, then, is alone enough to show those who think to pursue their favourite studies as a means of livelihood, that all experience and all pecuniary calculation is against them; and that those literary resources and flights of imagination which afford the purest enjoyment to men who have made a fortune, too often serve but as an *ignis fatuus* to lead men from one; so often has authorship led this world's pilgrims away from the paths of useful industry into the deepest ruts of difficulty, and overwhelmed them into the very Slough of Despair.

For, let us only invite the man of genius to be practical, and to consider the reason of the case: first of all, "an immortal poem"—say a volume like Campbell's, of which we happen to have facts well ascertained—must take years of meditation to compose, and a considerable outlay to publish.

That beautiful specimen of printing and engraving, so well known as the *Illustrated Edition of Campbell's Poems,* with which we are all so familiar as the Morocco-bound, price One Guinea, "realised," said its author, "a profit of no more than one shilling a copy." This was remunerative enough at first, when its sale amounted to 10,000 copies in a single year; but when afterwards it sank to two or three hundred, here was a poor estate to maintain a family. Campbell's calculation is so instructive, that we will explain it:—

Print and Paper, 500*l.*, or ...	£0	10	0	a Copy.
Publisher's Commission, at 10 per cent	0	2	0	,,
Binding and Advertising, and Copies to Reviews and Public Libraries	0	3	0	,,
The Retail Bookseller	0	5	0	,,
And the Author, only	0	1	0	,,
	£1	1	0	

Who can live by such profits as these!

One poet complained that the Annuals injured the sale of Poetry. "Poetical works were bought for presents: but the Annuals supersede them. Heath has sold 15,000 *Keepsakes,* and has bespoken 4000 yards of silk for binding!"

We had heard of whole stacks of dolls' arms and legs, and drawers full of dolls' eyes, as detailed

in a statement made in the House of Commons, to convey some notion of the extent of the trade of Manchester; but, for one Annual to cause an order for 4000 yards of silk, did take us by surprise, after all!

Coleridge used to illustrate the subject of unrequited authors by an amusing anecdote:—

A friend of Coleridge had published two erudite volumes of Divinity, and, having had no account from Paternoster Row for two years, he presumed that the book was, at all events, paying its own expenses. One morning, however, his publisher's traveller called with a long account of paper, print, advertisements, boarding, binding, and such-like prosaic charges. Casting his eye over the bill, he read, among other items, "For Cellarage, 3*l.* 3*s.*" "Bless me!" said the complacent author; "not much, certainly; three guineas only for selling so many hundred copies! But the spelling of these gentlemen seems rather novel. *Cellarage* is an antique or a technical expression of the trade, I presume?"

"Pardon me, sir," was the reply; "'cellarage' is not quite the same thing as 'selling.' Indeed, the books did not *sell*, and had to be removed to our warehouse, or *cellar*, and that, I trust, will explain the charge?"

Coleridge's friend used regularly to tell this story, as he drew forth a copy of his book from his crowded closet, and handed it over for a present to a neighbour.

What a pity such facts were not generally known! How often would the votaries of the *Attic* Muse be saved from their too congenial *Garret!* How dearly has many a fond parent paid for his folly, where the superior talents of a son have betrayed him into the fatal error of allowing the pursuits of literature to stand in place of a profession!

The sanguine temperament of the parents of clever youths, and their groundless assumptions that the treasures of the mind can, as a matter of course, be turned into ready coin, are well exemplified in Mr. Foster's description of the light-hearted Goldsmith, and his simple-minded brother.

"Oliver's brother, an Irish lad, feeling tired of lounging in weary idleness around Ballymahon, scrambled up to London as best he could, thinking brother Oliver could speak a kind word for him to some great man and soon make his fortune. Oliver is found in a garret, near Salisbury Square, looking very unlike an architect of wealth and honour.—'All in good time, my dear boy,' cried Oliver, joyfully, to check the bitterness of despair.

'All in good time; I shall be richer by and by. Besides, you see, I am not in positive want. Addison, let me tell you, wrote his poem of the *Campaign* in a garret in the Haymarket, three stories high; and you see I am not come to that yet, for I have only got as far as the second story.'"

Surely Oliver must some time after have "dipped his pen into his own heart," when, in a paper of the *Bee*, he described a poor author reducing his establishment thus:—"I have already given my landlady orders for an entire reform in the state of my finances. I declaim against hot suppers, drink less sugar in my tea, and cheek my grate with brickbats. Instead of hanging my room with pictures, I intend to adorn it with maxims of frugality, such as 'A penny saved is a penny got.'"

"A young man," says Southey, "cannot support himself by literary exertions, however great his talents and his industry. Woe be to the youthful poet who sets out upon his pilgrimage to the Temple of Fame with nothing but hope for his *viaticum!* There is the Slough of Despond, and the Hill of Difficulty, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death upon the way!"

Men who, while reading for the bar, trust to

their talents for support, usually write for newspapers or reviews. Newspaper-work is destructively laborious, and sends many fine fellows "prematurely to their grave." This reminds us of the first lines of the *Iliad*, where the offended Apollo's darts "send down to Pluto many a lusty fellow before his day."

Πολλας δ' ιφθιμους ψυχας Αϊδι προιαψεν.

This has always appeared to us highly applicable to the god of letters, though, perhaps, rather more so to the god of medicine.

However, as to starving authors: how many a man of genius, without actually dying of want, is as good as dead and lost to the world, all from want! How many a noble imagination has been starved into a mere ready-reckoner of yards of ribbon or pounds of figs! How many an inventive genius has been condemned to serve as a mere cog in that machinery which he had himself the talent to construct or to improve!

CHAPTER XVII.

SCOTIA'S POET ALL BUT LOST — MANY WAYS OF STARVING — CHATTERTON — GOLDSMITH'S GOOD THINGS BORROWED — SIR T. LAWRENCE, WILKIE, CARAVAGIO, NELSON, PITT, FOX, CORNWALLIS, THURLOW, GONE AT ONCE — THE BROKEN HEART — FEELING ADVICE — EPICTETUS.

Of all the instances of the noblest spirit taken captive — doomed like the high-mettled racer to be yoked to the plough — or, as Homer says, "consuming his own soul — shunning the paths of men," the world had well-nigh seen the last touch to the picture of noble misery exemplified in the fate that once hung over that favourite poet of poets, Robert Burns.

Burns, we have said, was starting for Jamaica, and would have been, "in all probability, a negro driver," says Campbell, "when he tried a publication of some poems, which realised 20*l.*, just in time to save the honour of Scotland; for, he had taken leave of his friends, and written, as he thought, his last song on his native soil,—

'The gloomy night is gathering fast.'"

From such casualties, how many a man of genius must actually have been lost to the world! However, Providence spares us blossoms enough in the intellectual as in the vegetable kingdom, in spite of the many that are nipped in the bud. And, perhaps, were it not for the chilly frosts of penury, the storms of adversity, and the gnawing worm of envy and unkindness, the balance of power in the world of intellect might be wholly lost, and we might find ourselves in society literally overpowered by the Sons of Genius.

As to this affecting song, Allan Cunningham tells us that Burns made the following pathetic confession:—"I had been skulking from covert to covert under all the terrors of a gaol"—and there were no model prisons in those days; the gaolers often had themselves been felons, and a man before the days of Howard might be eaten up by vermin, or perish from the loathsome diseases of those pestilential dens—"for some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken my last farewell of my friends; and my chest was on the road to Greenock, and I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia."—Professor Walker says that it was this very song which attracted notice when he requested Burns

to give a specimen of his poems, and thus was there "opened a new prospect for his poetical ambition."

The song is called *The Bonnie Banks of Ayr*, to which home of his childhood Burns thus bade farewell. How feeling are the lines—

"'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore;
Tho' death in every shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear!
But, round my heart the ties are bound—
That heart transpierced with many a wound—
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
To leave the Bonnie Banks of Ayr!"

But some persons may think we speak only figuratively when we talk of starving authors. Some will say, "Do men literally read to death? Do they die of the intensity of their labours, of the hardships of their condition, or of a broken heart?" —Yes! numbers untold and unknown.

"Why, faith, your honour," said a poor Irishman we once met amidst the beauties of the county Wicklow, as we questioned him rather minutely as to the mystery of living upon fourpence a-day— "Faith, perhaps we don't starve to death, as they call it; but, when a man sleeps winter nights on a bed of *dry* leaves that's most always *wet*, your

honour; and when he fills his belly with turnips and grasses instead of *praties*, then, altogether *it takes his life*. Maybe, your honour, the poor body ain't kilt by starvation, but he *jist* drops down dead in running away from it."

To the same effect, Goldsmith, in his *Natural History*, writes most feelingly; and, as Goldsmith always did write, from his own hard experience.

In this history—"made as entertaining as a Persian tale," according to Johnson's prediction of Goldy's powers of amusing—our author is quite tempted out of his way, to treat of the causes of (what he means without actually calling) an author's death-bed, and very artlessly and naturally explains how men do very often die of "something not a bit like starvation," but in reality caused by it—the fire of life going out for lack of fuel to keep it in.

Of all these painful reminiscences in literary history, that of Chatterton is second to none; though it is, indeed, an oft-told tale. When Chatterton commenced that frightfully dangerous experiment of living by his wits, and jostling his way to the foremost ranks amidst the struggling thousands of our great metropolis, that Child of Genius at first was sanguine, and wrote home—"No author can be poor who understands the arts

of booksellers. Without this necessary knowledge the greatest genius may starve—this knowledge I have pretty well dipped into."

Alas! three months sufficed to prove that magazines and country papers were all too little to keep up, what nature craves, a regular and constant supply of the necessaries of life. The poor boy composed a musical burletta; wrote fifteen songs for ten and sixpence; sold articles for two shillings each; lived on a roll or a tart and a glass of water a-day, and, now and then, a sheep's tongue: "he invented all the while"—we here quote from Mr. Foster's admirable summary of this wonderful boy's miseries—"brave letters about his happiness and success, to the only creatures that loved him, his grandmother, mother, and sister, at Bristol; even sent them, out of his so many pence a-day, bits of china, fans, and a gown; and then, one fatal morning, after many bitter disappointments, having gone some three days without food, and refused his poor landlady's invitation to dinner, he was found dead in his miserable room, the floor thickly strewn with scraps of manuscripts he had destroyed, and a pocket-book memorandum to the effect that the booksellers owed him eleven pounds: and the cup which had held arsenic and water was still grasped

in his hand. It was a wretched little street out of Holborn; the body was taken to the bone-house of St. Andrew's parish, but no one came to claim it; and, in due time, the Shoe-lane pauper burial-ground received what remained of Chatterton."

"The marvellous boy! The sleepless soul who perished in his pride!" So wrote the youthful Keats, who was himself said to have "died of a Review"—certainly, the few last grains of Keats's hour-glass were shaken and were hurried by the anguish he felt at Gifford's cutting article in the *Quarterly*.

This is a sad reproach to Gifford: but Gifford, as a critic, was much too severe. Let any one read Sir Walter Scott's criticism on Byron, and see the kind and winning manner in which he points out that great poet's defects, as if the critic would be but too happy to see him "return to a better mind," and then he will learn what is due to the *genus irritabile*, to the overwrought nerves and acute sensibilities of men of letters.—Why should a literary judge be the only judge who speaks without a heart?

Gifford, like other violent men—violent in word or deed—sometimes "did that he should be sorry for." What could be more shocking to any feeling mind than to think that he was guilty

of designating Charles Lamb a poor maniac! — a term for which Gifford suffered much self-reproach, when informed of that generous-hearted fellow's misfortunes; for Lamb, before the age of twenty, had been in confinement in Hoxton mad-house.

Southey said Gifford had a heart full of kindness for all living creatures except authors; whom he regarded as a fishmonger regards eels, or as Izaac Walton did frogs, worms, and slugs. And then Southey says, most characteristically, "I always protested against the indulgence of that temper in his *Review*."

As to "understanding the arts of booksellers," Chatterton meant the ways of business, and suiting the supply to the demand. So, many great men have "stooped to conquer" — have condescended to be not only ornamental but useful; and not a few even of those who have so *stooped* from the high and exalted sphere of genius, yet have not conquered after all.

It is related of Sir Thomas Lawrence that a neighbour, with all the self-satisfaction of one who thought himself a desirable customer, once applied to him to paint his parlour; and, being much mortified by a refusal, the man said, "Well, sir, if you are above your business, I know those who will be glad to do it!" Sir Thomas little antici-

pated the channel of house-decoration into which his art would be diverted at the present day. However, long before Sir T. Lawrence's time, just as there has been many "a song for a supper," so has there been many a picture for a dinner.

In an obscure village in Fifeshire there used to be an alehouse-sign painted by the Scottish Teniers, Wilkie. And what a sad and pitiful story is that of the death of Caravagio! "Unknowing how to flatter the great, he was driven from city to city in the utmost indigence, and might truly be said to paint for his bread." He was obliged to leave Rome—and after travelling on foot as far as his strength would permit, at last, faint with famine and fatigue, he called at an obscure inn by the wayside; but the host refused to supply him with a dinner unless he were paid first.

As Caravagio was quite penniless, he took down the innkeeper's sign, and painted it anew for his dinner.

Thus refreshed, he proceeded on his journey, and left the innkeeper not quite satisfied with this kind of payment. Some company of distinction, however, coming soon after, and struck with the beauty of the new sign, bought it at an advanced price, and astonished the innkeeper with their

generosity: he was resolved, therefore, to get as many signs as possible drawn by the same artist, as he found he could sell them to good advantage; and accordingly set out after Caravagio, to bring him back. It was nightfall before he came up with him, but found him dead. There lay the unfortunate Caravagio, cold and motionless by the wayside, overcome by fatigue, resentment, and despair!

This affecting story derives additional interest from the fact that it is told by one who had himself rambled over the Continent, earning many a supper and a bed—albeit only "three chairs and a bolster"—by tunes upon his flute. And since Liebig teaches us that all expense of breath increases hunger, Oliver Goldsmith—for it is of him we are speaking, the hero of his own *Philosophic Wanderer*—always writes as one feelingly reminded of the nature of such an existence. The story is told in the *Bee*—a periodical which, like the *Citizen of the World*, is the mine from which many a gem is drawn by modern writers and worn without acknowledgment, only a little disguised and varied in its setting. Let us give two or three instances.

A very witty caricature lately appeared, re-

presenting one man quite drunk talking politics, with much patriotic fervour, to another man peeping through the bars of a gaol. "Mercy!" says the gaol-bird, "how horrible to think our liberties *is* in danger!" "Aye — but what I am most of all con*sarned* for," replies the drunkard, with an oath, "is our blessed Religion!"

The point of this caricature is borrowed from the *Citizen of the World.*

Some have claimed for Talleyrand, others for Rochefoucauld, the worldly-wise maxim that "the use of language is to *conceal* our thoughts."

In the *Bee,* No. 3, Saturday, October 20, 1759, "On the Use of Language," are these words — the argument being that to confess poverty is a slow way to obtain riches: — "He who best knows how to conceal his necessity and desires is the most likely person to find redress; and *the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants, as to conceal them.*"

In the *Life of William Wilberforce,* that excellent man's well-meaning biographers were imposed on by an anecdote of a picture of the true Reformer of the World, the Redeemer on the Cross, being pointed out to Wilberforce as a warning of what he might expect in his worthy design of

reforming the morals of the higher circles. The original is in the *Bee*:—"The old man takes his son by the hand, and drawing back a curtain at the end of the room, discovered a crucifix exquisitely painted. 'My son,' said he, 'you desire to change the religion of your country,—behold the fate of a Reformer!"

So abundant is the evidence, to return from this digression, that true Genius is often of a highly sensitive nature, which sinks before such slights and affronts of fortune as are almost unfelt by common men.

Wilberforce, when he heard of the death of William Pitt, said, "Poor Pitt! I almost believe he died of a broken heart! The love of his country burned in him with as ardent a flame as ever warmed the human bosom, and the accounts of the armies struck a death's blow within him."

Here Wilberforce alludes to the defeat at Austerlitz, so often said to have been the death of Pitt.—"Nelson, Pitt, Cornwallis," said Wilberforce, "all gone together!" Yes, and only a little later he might have added, Thurlow and Fox. Never did twenty months make a wider gap in the circle of the Great!

Wilberforce goes on to remark on "the broken heart!" "What! was Pitt like Otway, or Collins,

or Chatterton, who had not so much as a needful complement of food to sustain their bodies? Was he even like Suwaroff, basely deserted and driven into exile by the sovereign he so long had served? No! Pitt was highest in power—the favourite of king and people. Yes, this man who died of a broken heart was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer!"

So much for the happiness of great men! The condition of this life is, that every blessing has a sorrow proportioned to its joys. Noble and generous hearts receive many a pang unfelt by the more dull and grosser natures of common men, just as the ear most sensitive of harmony shrinks most from discord. Lord Byron is related by Thomas Moore to have betrayed far more nervous excitement while awaiting the criticism of the *Edinburgh Review*, than while awaiting a message that was to decide the (supposed) necessity of a duel.

There was one Christmas Day when the flakes of chilly sorrow snowed fast and thick on poor Oliver Goldsmith; when a dunning milkwoman besieged his door; when creditors threatened him with gaol; and when his publisher, Griffiths, having become security for the identical suit of clothes in which Oliver had four days back been plucked at

the College of Surgeons, was outrageous at finding the said clothes had been pawned—though, good, tender-hearted soul, only to rescue his poor landlady's husband from prison! Just then, when the sunshine of hope was powerless to pierce the gloom or melt the icicles of stern and cold reality, our Poet gave the following advice concerning the son of his brother Henry:—

"Above all things," he said emphatically, "let him never touch a romance or a novel; these paint beauty in colours more charming than nature, and describe happiness that man never tastes. How delusive, how destructive, are those pictures of consummate bliss! They teach the youthful mind to sigh after beauty and happiness that never existed; to despise the little good which Fortune has mixed in our cup, by expecting more than she ever gave. Let his poor wandering uncle's example be placed before his eyes. I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the approaches of insidious cunning; and often, by being charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty."

The conclusion to which our argument has led us, supported by opinions and examples so numerous, coincides with Goldsmith's most feeling and fraternal advice; namely, that half the miseries of authors, as of all other men, result from their forming a false estimate of the sphere in which their lot is cast. The advice, "Let him never touch a romance or novel," simply means, let a youth avoid everything that encourages expectations too bright to be realised—everything which represents "the race always to the swift, and the battle always to the strong"—everything which supposes a scale and distribution of rewards and prizes on any principle so Utopian as that of abstract justice, or a pure regard for the public good.

Epictetus has given us an invaluable maxim for avoiding much of that impatience and irritation which ruffles the smooth surface of daily life:—

"Before I do anything, I consider all that is commonly attendant upon the performance of it. If I go to the bath, I reflect on what must naturally happen while I bathe; and then, if not satisfied with all the inconveniences and advantages together, I think it wiser not to bathe at all. I consider beforehand that persons about a bath naturally will crowd and splash, and occasionally trample on and wet our clothes—all this I count

part of bathing; and, so considered, things otherwise annoying, are borne as a matter of course, quite as if they were part of the venture."

Apply this golden rule to literature. The natural fruits of literature are the improvement and the entertainment of the mind, to make our pleasures greater and our sorrows less, to substitute *idlesse* for idleness; to make "our idle hours not idly spent"—and to enable us not to kill time, but to enjoy it. How beautifully did Herschel say:—

"A mind which has once imbibed a taste for scientific inquiry has within itself an inexhaustible source of pure and exciting contemplations: one would think Shakespeare had such a mind in view, when he describes a contemplative man as finding

> 'Tongues in trees, books in the running streams,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.'

A thousand questions are continually arising in his mind, a thousand subjects of inquiry presenting themselves, which keep his faculties in constant exercise, and his thoughts perpetually on the wing, so that lassitude is excluded from his life, and that craving after artificial excitement and dissipation of mind, which leads so many into frivolous, unworthy, and destructive pursuits, is altogether eradicated from his bosom."

To give a picture of a happy Author, Mr. Lockhart elegantly describes Sir Walter Scott as "the Great Magician, in the full sunshine of his ease, amusing himself and delighting the world by unrolling, fold after fold, his endlessly-varied panorama of romance—tranquilly enjoying, rather than exerting his genius, in the production of those masterpieces, which have peopled all our firesides with inexpensive friends, and rendered the solitary supremacy of Shakespeare, as an all-comprehensive and a genial painter of man, no longer a proverb."

Man—even Christian man—is not forbidden (provided it be only a secondary motive) to aspire to fame, or desire to influence the destinies of his race, and "to do while living something for which he shall be missed when dead;" and "of all fame," said Campbell, "Literary fame is the only fame of which a wise man ought to be ambitious, because it is the only living and lasting fame. Bonaparte will be forgotten, or remembered only like Nimrod or other cut-throats of antiquity, who serve us for the commonplaces of declamation. Pour out your mind in a great poem, and you will exercise authority over the feelings and opinions of mankind as long as the language in which you write shall last, and as long as the heart of man shall respond to the calls of virtue and of truth." But Campbell

would readily have allowed that there is yet a nobler fame than that of literature.

When Sir James Mackintosh heard of Wilberforce's success, after twenty years, he wrote from the West Indies, expressing his wonder and admiration "that a short period of the short life of one man, well and wisely directed, should be sufficient to remedy the miseries of millions for ages! Thousands *will be* animated by Mr. Wilberforce's example, to attack all the forms of corruption and cruelty that scourge mankind. Oh! what twenty years in the life of one man those were, which abolished the Slave Trade! How precious is time! How valuable and dignified is human life, which in general appears so base and miserable! How noble and sacred is human nature, made capable of achieving such truly great exploits!"

Truly this prophecy has been fulfilled. If we have societies for slaves, both white and black; if it is become now the ambition of the great to be first and foremost in ameliorating the condition of the poor—the first impulse, be it never forgotten, was from William Wilberforce.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GENIUS HAPPY IN ITSELF — CANNOT WORK TO ORDER — CHANTREY — DRAMATIC LITERATURE; WHY ONCE SO COMMON — PAMPHLETEERING — REPORTING — GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE — SWIFT — WILKES — ADDISON — PENS *v.* TONGUES — WRITING FOR THE MARKET — DISCOUNTING EXTRAORDINARY — XIMENES AND HIS POLYGLOT.

Such are the natural fruits of well-directed genius! So evident is it that there are other medals in the school of literature besides golden medals; namely, those happy hours and purest pleasures that gold can never buy, and that sense of well-doing and conscious usefulness in which talents, wisely employed, never fail to indulge us.

And, beyond all other rewards and all other incitements — the love of fame and the pride of power, and, exulting in the minds they can influence and the hearts they can sway — these constitute the prevailing motives of Men of Genius. It is not the love of money, but the love of Art, that

fired our Painters and our Sculptors. Cold, indeed, is the heart that cannot sympathise with the feelings of creative genius, as it sees the shapeless block of marble gradually changing into the ideal grace and grandeur of a figure that almost seems to move and breathe. In this spirit, Chantrey bore witness to the true impulse of genius when he stood in St. Peter's, at Rome: Canova was then engaged in making a statue of a Pope to be placed over the Sepulchre of St. Peter; on which Chantrey remarked, "What a place to work for! How exciting to the genius of an Artist!"

The same spirit actuated Burns, when he said, "The heart of man, and the fancy of the Poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live. If miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of an immortal soul, I had better have been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to the breaking of clods, and picking up grubs; not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards — creatures with which," he said, in allusion to his occasional hunger and privations, "I could almost exchange lives at any time."

The Spirit of Genius is essentially free. It cannot "sing the songs of Zion in a strange land." The taskmaster in vain commands the services of

the nobler part of man — for then "the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth," and "the right hand forgets its cunning." True, perhaps, it may be, that the pressure of want may rouse the man of genius to exertion; true, it may be, that Erskine, when disheartened at the difficulties of his early career at the Bar, was roused into energy by the passing thought that his little ones were pulling at the skirts of his gown: so, we would not deny the cogency of a secondary motive, provided the higher impulse of genius be not wanting. We mean only to maintain that times undoubtedly there are, when the lyre is unstrung, and when the wand owns no magic hands; and that then any importunate demand almost paralyses exertion and postpones the moment at which the inspiration would for once more prevail.

Campbell said, "To write one verse, as a duty, when the very mood does not happen to fall upon one, is more than I can tax my Muse withal. If I sat down (as requested) *on purpose* to write a song, I am sure it would be vapid."—Wonderful, indeed, must that mind be that can venture to advertise — "Poems made to order on the shortest notice!"

Allan Cunningham tells us of Burns, "when he hit off a happy verse in a random fit of inspiration,

he sought for a subject suitable to its tone of language and feeling, and then completed the poem. This shows a mind full of the elements of Poetry." "My passions," he said, "when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme: and, the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet."

But, however this may be—however capricious the real character of genius, and however great the freedom required for its happiest efforts, still, all experience shows that genius can rarely be indulged in all the favourable conditions which it would reasonably require. For, supposing an original writer scorns to turn out of his path for money, still the syren notes of fame, and even the opportunities of a fair hearing, limited as they are by the difficulties of publication, all conspire to dictate a given form and style, however little that form may suit the natural bent of the author's talents.

For, it must certainly be granted that Authors pursue praise at least, if not profit; or say, a sphere of useful influence. For each of these objects publicity is indispensable; and, in an age when books are expensive, or of slow circulation, the chief opportunities for publicity are afforded by the stage. This observation will explain the fact that,

both in ancient and comparatively modern times, so many men of literature have written plays. Witness the large part of Greek literature that consists in the Drama, and the numerous dramatists in England. Sir Walter Scott shows us that, though Dryden could obtain but two hundred and fifty pounds for a whole volume of his *Fables*, yet he could make a hundred guineas by a single play. Goldsmith never earned five hundred pounds so easily as when he wrote *She Stoops to Conquer*. The consequence is, that much talent has been diverted into Dramatic channels — and many a man capable of a good Poem has been ridiculed for a bad Play — because, in the form of the Drama, Literature advertises and publishes itself, addressing itself to the learned and unlearned alike, by reaching the ears and eyes even of those who have no mind to read.

During the whole of the seventeenth century, therefore, Genius was often condemned to put on buskins, and fret its hour upon the Stage. In the present century the Review and the Novel offer the most tempting remuneration. Sir Walter Scott found Novels more profitable than Poetry, and in one instance he was induced by his publisher to work up a projected history into the Novel form.

And, if the seventeenth and the nineteenth cen-

turies exercised an overruling influence on the liberty of the press, men of genius might well have complained of a certain degree of tyranny in the last century also; for, the eighteenth was the century of Political Writing and of Pamphleteers.

During the greater part of the last century, from the days of Addison even to the days of Pitt and Fox, literary talents were no less serviceable to a Government than oratorical powers are now. For, in the absence of reporters, every statement of facts and arguments of consequence was limited, in its influence, to those who actually heard it. The Political Tract and the Pamphlet were the only means by which the ablest Member of Parliament in those days could speak to the country.

Sir Robert Peel, it is related, in certain speeches, was only ostensibly addressing the House, but, in reality, dictating to the reporters. He knew that a speech in Parliament affords the best of all means of world-wide publication; when, thanks to Mr. Applegarth's improvement, *The Times* is thrown off at the rate of ten or twelve thousand an hour, while the Post-office, reading-rooms, and paper-lenders form a no less effectual machinery for bringing the greatest possible number of minds to bear on the greatest possible number of papers.

But, the days of Sir Robert Peel were far more

highly favoured than the days of Sir Robert Walpole. Our grandfathers were not so readily informed of the reasonings or the intentions of Government. Only turn to the reports of the Parliament of "Lilliput," in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and you will find that "Mr. Urban" had too great respect for the privileges of the House to give even the names of the speakers. And as to the accuracy of these reports, the celebrated Mr. Woodfall used to rest his head upon his cane, and "devour up the discourse," without daring to take a note; and then go home and write from memory as best he could. Dr. Johnson has published what he called *Debates in Parliament*, quite in his own style; and not a little after his own thoughts, too; for he actually confessed that he always took care "that the Whig dogs should not have the best of the argument."

This does not seem quite fair in the Doctor, but it seems the way of the world. For, when Lord John Russell applied to examine some documents at Paris, the Curator refused, and afterwards related to the Duke of Wellington how shrewd he had been. On the Duke remonstrating, the man replied,—"Mais, monsieur, il va écrire une Histoire *Whig*, et moi je suis Monarchique, et vous aussi."

But those were certainly the palmy days of political pamphleteers. It was well for Swift and Wilkes that they lived in those times. For, such writers, having both wit and point enough to wing their opinions, to reach the dull and unpractised readers of those days, served as the only substitute for the present race of Parliamentary Reporters, in spreading the opinions of statesmen over the country at large. And high, indeed, was the value which statesmen set on such literary services. Addison was very soon adopted as a useful ally to the Whig Government, even although he could not open his lips to defend their measures in debate.

Once only did Addison attempt to speak: one trial was enough for his modesty; he sat down in confusion, and never rose again. But, then, Addison could write; and, such was the value of his pen, that, within nine years from the time he first entered Parliament, he rose to offices as high as Chatham or Fox ever filled. Even to the office of Secretary of State could Addison attain, without the influence of either birth or property — without being able to lend any aid in the strife of tongues, and, strange to say, with a very limited capacity for public business. But, the power of his pen could make up for all these deficiencies.

"In those days, the pen," says Lord Macaulay,

very graphically, "was a more formidable political engine than the tongue—Walpole, Pulteney, Pitt, and Fox, at an earlier period, when they sat down amidst the acclamations of the House of Commons, had not done half what was necessary. After prevailing with the House, they had still to plead their cause before the country; and this they could only do by means of the press. Their works are now forgotten. But, it is certain there were in Grub Street few more assiduous scribblers of Thoughts, Letters, Answers, Remarks, than those two great chiefs of parties."

Lord Macaulay proceeds to say, that "Pulteney, when leader of the Opposition, and possessed of thirty-thousand a-year, edited the *Craftsman*. Also, that it may be doubted whether St. John, the best Tory speaker, did as much for the Tories as Swift; and whether Cowper, probably the best of the Whig speakers, did as much for the Whigs, as the pen of Addison."

Addison, Price, and Tickell, it is curious to observe, were all Under-Secretaries of State, besides holding other offices. Steel, Congreve, Gay, and John Dennis, were all rewarded with commissionerships and various lucrative appointments. Jonathan Swift was made Dean of St. Patrick, and might have had the great object of his ambition—

an English bishopric; only it is said that Archbishop Sharpe revealed to Queen Anne the true character of the heartless and misanthropic author of the *Tale of a Tub*. Wilkes, continues Macaulay, could have nothing from the Government of his day but outlawry and imprisonment; still, even this dishonour, added to a verdict of libel and blasphemy, did not prevent him from being returned Member for Middlesex, while actually in prison; and he was successively Lord Mayor, Sheriff, and Chamberlain of the city of London. The *North Briton* was said to have caused the resignation of the Earl of Bute. No doubt, if Wilkes had been on the side of Government, he could have commanded any office that he was capable of holding.

Considering, therefore, the state of the press and the requirements of parties, we can easily believe that a literary "Pensioner" meant a "Hireling," according to Dr. Johnson's severe definition; and that the mere skirmishers and guerrillas of literature should find employment, while the solid supporters of truth and morality, and the heavy-armed assailants of error, should seek encouragement in vain.

As to the political influence of the pen, even late in the last century, a very painful instance is cited by Sir Samuel Romilly, who did so much to

diminish the severity of our criminal laws. One Madan published his *Thoughts on Executive Justice*, a small tract, in which he carried the doctrine of the "Efficacy of Punishments depending on their certainty," so far, as to insist on the expediency of enforcing all their sanguinary and barbarous sentences on every occasion. The work was a vehement censure on the alleged leniency of judges, of secretaries of state, for the frequency of pardons which they granted. Romilly says,—"The tract was much read; and was followed by the sacrifice of many lives! Lord Ellenborough did, indeed, deny in the House of Lords that the book had any effect whatever, either on judges or on ministers. To this assertion," says Romilly, "I have only to oppose these plain facts:—

"In the year before the work was published, there were executed in London *only* fifty-one malefactors [though this is nearly fifty times as many as are now executed from a population nearly double]; but in 1785, the year after the publication, there were executed ninety-seven! and it was recently after that publication that was exhibited a spectacle, unseen in London for a long course of years before, the execution of nearly twenty criminals at a time."

When, so sanguinary was the direct tendency

of such a Tract, and such the evidence of its sanguinary effect, one would be curious to know whether the said Mr. Madan did really congratulate himself on the success of his publication, or whether he felt, like M. Guillotin, shocked at the impulse that his ingenuity had given to a race of men already too prone to shed blood.

We could have mentioned one more instance of delicate catering for the literary market, in the letters addressed by Sterne to Dodsley, the bookseller, to prevail upon him to publish his *Tristram Shandy*.

Dodsley had declined risking fifty pounds upon the book; and no wonder, for *Tristram Shandy*, in manuscript, would be the most unreadable composition in the language. Besides, a publisher's calculations are altogether at fault with works of a wholly new and original structure. *Tristram Shandy* was an experiment. Dr. Johnson saw little merit in it: he instanced it as an eccentricity which would not retain its popularity. And publishers can only deal safely where they can depend on the name of the author. It was on the faith of Charles James Fox's magic name alone that Miller ventured four thousand guineas for that statesman's *History*. But where the author's name alone will not sell a book, the publisher must be careful.

So Sterne was obliged to be very humble in his application, modestly submitting,—

"I propose to print a *lean* edition, in two volumes, of the size of *Rasselas*, on the same paper and type, at my own expense, merely to feel the pulse of the world, that I may know what price to set upon the remaining volumes. I can then bargain with you for the rest as they come out, which will be every six months."

So *Tristram Shandy* was, perhaps, the first instance of a work of fiction coming out in parts like the *Pickwick Papers*, though of a very different size and form of typography. Dr. Moore says that Smollett's *History of England*, also, was issued in numbers, and that weekly, at sixpence each, though originally published in four quartos.

Now, mark the postscript of Sterne's letter:—

"P.S.—All locality is taken out of the book—the satire general; notes are added where wanted, and *the whole matter made more saleable*—about a hundred pages added—and, to conclude, a strong interest formed and forming in its behalf."

Sir Walter Scott, we have hinted, could also listen to Murray as to the most marketable form that his genius could assume. He had intended to write a disquisition on the gipsy tribes; but, in compliance with his publisher's request, he in-

troduced all he had to say of that picturesque generation in the way of comment on the character of Meg Merrilies.

But, with all these lets and hindrances, the noblest reward of genius is that high privilege to wing our thoughts over the world, and to influence man's destiny both for time and for eternity.

And, above all men who have enjoyed this privilege, I would instance William Wilberforce. For, besides earning a world-wide and undying memory with the great and good for the fetters which he struck off from the limbs of the poor Africans, Wilberforce could also do much to set free the slaves of Satan, tied and bound by the chain of their sins.

Few works ever had such a circulation in the last century as Wilberforce's *Practical Christianity*, published in 1797. Five editions, or seven thousand five hundred copies, were sold in the first half year. This was a work which, both in its style and topics, in its truly sensible and rational mode of address, as also from the position and character of the writer, was eminently calculated to reach the higher circles. It was such a book that the Lord Chancellor could recommend to the Prime Minister of the day.—"Let me recommend you to open the last section of the fourth chapter,"

said Lord Loughborough to William Pitt. "You will see wherein the religion which I espouse differs practically from the common system."

Again, what a proud moment must it have been for Sir Walter Scott, when the Archbishop of Dublin, in the presence of the Duke of Wellington and the Bishop of Exeter, in 1827, proposed Sir Walter's health, remarking—"Sir Walter could reflect on the course of a long literary life, with the consciousness that everything he had written tended to the practice of virtue and the improvement of the human race."

And, as to the stimulus of gain and honour, and all other motives combined, Lockhart says that, in 1818, Sir Walter Scott's profits on his novels alone had been for some years 10,000*l.* a-year. "His position was, I am inclined to believe, what no other man had ever won for himself by the pen alone. His works were the daily food, not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe. His society was courted by all the eminent men in England. Station, power, wealth, beauty, and genius, strove with each other in every demonstration of respect and worship."

During the panic of 1825–6, the sanguine publisher, Mr. Constable, proposed to raise from the Bank of England from 100,000*l.* to 200,000*l.*

on the security of the *Waverley* and other copyrights! Scott did receive 8,000*l.* for *Woodstock*, written in the hours of distress; still, the Bank of England would have been slow, indeed, "to discount such paper."

Of *Guy Mannering*, 7,000 copies were sold in the first three months, and 50,000 before Scott's death, besides foreign reprints. The first was such a poverty-stricken edition, that it is quite a curiosity in these days. Three poor volumes, with a humility of paper and print which the meanest novelist would now disdain to imitate, but, withal —price one guinea!

Authorship has, indeed, its pleasures; it knows a thrill of the deepest interest in every stage of its progress. Every author can sympathise with the feelings of Dibdin, when he says,—"It is an odd, and, perhaps, a puzzling question, whether the joy on receiving a *first* proof sheet, or the *last* proof sheet, be the greater? Whatever be the answer, the source of the joy is, in each case, essentially different; and I incline to the joy-inspiring first proof sheet. Hope is then newly ardent—not a feather of her wings is plucked or drooping: there are no afterthoughts, no misgivings; the tribunal of the public is yet at a picturesque distance."

The story of Cardinal Ximenes receiving the first copy of his *Polyglot* is truly touching:—"I have often heard John Brocario," says Gomecius, "son of Arnoldus Brocario, the printer of the *Polyglot*, relate to his friends that, when his father had put the finishing stroke to the last volume, he deputed him to carry it to the Cardinal, while Brocario was then a lad; and, having dressed himself in a very elegant suit of clothes, he approached Ximenes, and delivered the volume into his hands. 'I render thanks to thee, O God!' exclaimed Ximenes, 'that thou hast protracted my life to this completion of my Biblical labours!' And afterwards, conversing with his friends, the Cardinal would often observe, 'that the surmounting of the various difficulties of his political situation, afforded him not half the solace as that which arose from the finishing of the *Polyglot*.'—Ximenes died the same year (1517), not many weeks after."

So powerful with men of genius is the stimulus of Usefulness.

CHAPTER XIX.

LIFE MORE THAN LITERATURE — LABOURS OF A PRIME MINISTER — CATALOGUE OF MISERIES — GENIUS IN GAOL — PLEA FOR PUBLISHERS — SCOTT'S "COMMENTARY" — DEATH OF SHERIDAN, COWLEY, NELSON, MOORE — HOW PLEASANT SCENES WERE DRAWN IN POVERTY AND PAIN.

It is, however, a very great mistake to consider Literature as everything in this life. "Literature," said the Rev. John Mitford to the author of these pages, at a time of life when the hint was most required, "is a great resource, and very charming in its way; but the sympathies of the social circle, the energies of a healthy frame (which so many sacrifice when the head is rebelling against the body), and all the satisfactions of duties well discharged in our proper sphere — these constitute a far larger part of happiness. And as to literary society, though justly accounted a great pri-

vilege, one of the first men in London very lately complained to me he had had enough of it, and longed for a more tranquil and routine existence."

In the same spirit, Sir Walter Scott gave the following hint, much valued by Mr. Lockhart at an early age:—

Sir Walter was in the neighbourhood of Edgeworthstown and the little hamlet of Pallasmore, from which same district both Oliver Goldsmith and Miss Edgeworth derived their early knowledge of Irish character. It was remarked, that poets and novelists were apt to look at life and the world only as materials for art: Sir Walter replied,—

"I fear you have some very young ideas in your head: are you not too apt to measure things by some reference to literature—to disbelieve that anybody can be worth much care who has no knowledge of that sort of thing, or taste for it?—God help us! What a poor world this would be if that were the true doctrine! I have read books enough, and observed and conversed enough with men of eminent and splendidly cultivated minds, too, in my time; but, I assure you, I have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism, under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the

lot of friends and neighbours, than I ever yet met with out of the pages of the Bible. We shall never learn to feel and respect our real calling and destiny, unless we have taught ourselves to consider everything as moonshine, compared with the education of the heart."

Unhappily, the heart as well as the head of men in high office is severely tried. Sir Robert Peel, in 1837, thus described the labours of a Minister of State:—

"Consider the life of intolerable labour and care, the briefness of the career,—the causes of the death of many of those who have reached the summit of precarious power in this country. Look back upon the history of Great Britain, from 1804 to 1830, a period of twenty-six years, and you will find that death has swept away all the ministers, with two exceptions, who had successively presided over the destinies of their country! I shall never forget the words addressed to myself by Lord Liverpool, but a few days before that fatal blow which ended in his decease, when I remarked to him, with satisfaction, that I thought him looking better than I had seen him for some time previously. 'Ah!' said he, 'no man knows what it is to have been the Prime Minister of England for seventeen years, and never during that period to

have received his letters by the post in the morning without a feeling of anxiety and apprehension.'"

As we are now drawing near the end of our Bill of Pains and Penalties, so we may as well hurry through our dark catalogue by giving briefly rather a striking list of the miseries of Authors, which we have collected in the course of our reading, though we fear to trespass on the "enclosed common" of Disraeli.

Simon Ockley, author of the *History of the Saracens,* said he was writing the lives of others, and could hardly afford to live himself. Cervantes at times wanted bread: Camoens died in an hospital: Tasso would have thanked us for candles to write by; and Ariosto could not have helped him: Corneille had a present from Louis XIV. when dying from want; and another great dramatist, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, had the bailiffs about his dying chamber: Otway was starved: Collins, suffering under the pressure of want, "ran a howling madman through the aisles of Chichester Cathedral." Dryden, Savage, Johnson, and Goldsmith, have all, at times, wanted a dinner; and refusing to partake of his landlady's, Chatterton committed suicide. Poor Sydenham died in a spunging-house: it was out of sympathy for his misfortunes that the Literary Fund was first in-

stituted—on which fund Rymer, Spenser, and Le Sage, were poor enough to have had a claim. John Milton was at one time wasting his sublimity in teaching Latin grammar. Ben Jonson worked as a bricklayer, near Chancery Lane; and Izaac Walton measured tapes and threads near the same street. Chantrey once carried milk-pails in Sheffield; and Stephenson was employed in a coal-mine.

It is surprising how many great works were written wholly or partially in a gaol.

The unknown author of *Fleta* has recorded by its title that that learned law-book was written in the Fleet. A prison formed also the study of Buchanan and of Grotius; also of Boethius, whose *Consolations* seem as congenial to their birthplace as Dodd's *Prison Thoughts*. From a prison also issued some works by Sir Walter Raleigh, Lydiat, Selden, and Sir W. Davenant. But, to crown all, it was either wholly or partly from a prison that Cervantes wrote *Don Quixotte;* that Voltaire wrote his *Henriade;* Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe;* and John Bunyan his *Pilgrim's Progress*.

But, of all the trials of Genius, how is it we have said nothing about the "hard-hearted Publishers?" Have not we so often heard of their making extortionate bargains, fastening on like so

many vampyres, and sucking out the life's blood of the poor scholar, and coining his very brains for their greedy profit?

The reason we have not enumerated such cruelty among the list of an Author's miseries is, simply, because it has no kind of existence, except it be in the vacant minds of those who are ignorant alike of the nature of commerce and of the small average profits from the sale of literature.

First of all, an Author has too large a choice of Publishers to admit of any combination against him: and we fancy we see him carrying his MS. in and out of those very busy offices, which form that truly Sacra Via—through Paternoster Row, Ave Maria Lane, and Amen Corner.

Starting from this point, and travelling to the West, the Author may offer his literary wares to dealers of every class, of every shade of opinion, and of every line of politics. He may find Publishers Legal and Surgical—Publishers Scientific, Agricultural, and Sporting—Publishers of Novels and of Travels—and Publishers exclusively Theological. These, again, are subdivided into Publishers High Church and Low Church; besides some who are more exclusively Publishers Tractarian and Mediæval. Just as the dealers in fish, flesh, and fowl, keep each to his several com-

modity; so also will Messrs. Longman, Ridgway, and Bentley, each be likely to make an offer for a MS. wholly unsaleable in the connexion of the other two.

Every Shopkeeper is a kind of Publisher. Fish in a heap upon the shore, pigs yet unturned into bacon, and geese and ducks still cackling at the barn-door, require—and that quite as much as any ream of scribbled paper—each a separate Publisher to divide and subdivide, to cut, carve, and cater, and to publish their merits to an adequate number of consumers. And who ever heard of a complaint because Butchers or Fishmongers would not buy anything that farmers choose to fatten or fishermen to catch? All depends on the demand. Each tradesman—whether he exhibits on marble slabs or skewers and hangs aloft on iron hooks—publishes and offers to-day just what his customers asked for yesterday. This is the rule of Leadenhall Market; this also is the prudential maxim of Paternoster Row. This, too, was the maxim of, literally, the "Trade," the *Socii*, in Ancient Rome; for Horace puffs off a work by crying, "This is the book to earn money for the Trade: this is the book for foreign orders."

A horse-dealer needs not be a good judge of a horse: neither is it his business. A Publisher is

equally far from studying the abstract merit of Poetry or Prose. Each party studies only the taste of his customers. A lively, showy article, will often answer the purposes both of horse-dealer and publisher, far better than something of more substantial merit. Neither of these gentlemen care to speculate on any more solid excellence than their respective customers will appreciate. Cod-fish, no doubt, from time immemorial, carried oil in their livers; still, it was not till the public appreciated this valuable specific that it ever became an article of trade. And had any scientific young doctor, twenty years ago, gone fretting and vapouring in and out of all the druggists' shops, and raising a clamour against that pestle-and-mortar fraternity, because they were too wise to buy what the world was yet too ignorant to swallow—we should then have had an exact counterpart to the prejudice entertained by the fathers and mothers of genius, real or supposed, against the race of Publishers.

In the Literary Market there is anything but a deficient supply. Valuable works are offered sometimes for the mere pleasure which the Authors feel in seeing their opinions in print. While Lord Byron was on the Committee of the Drury Lane Theatre, he says, five hundred plays were offered

for sale in a single year, to this one theatre alone. Distressed ladies add to the competition, and thus reduce the already very small wages of the poor needlewoman: unemployed gentlemen also compete and reduce the pay of poor Authors. Not only is the remuneration of literature diminished by its abundance; but it is also further diminished by the risk attending every publication by an unknown Author. And, here let it not be forgotten that, were it not for the enterprise and the skill of the great Publishers in advertising and exhibiting the works of youthful Authors, many a man of genius would live and die unhonoured and unknown.

Many persons, ignorant of the risk and the losses of Publishers, think it very preposterous that they should ever derive a larger profit from a work than its Author. But when we see that it is often the Publisher alone who gives a work every penny of its pecuniary value, all such complaints must cease. No work of genius can be expected to force its own way amidst the thousands, all externally as well entitled to consideration as itself, unless it be aided by the catalogues, the periodical sales, or auctions to the trade, the advertisements, and the wonderful machinery of circulation, which the great Publishers have at their command. The

natural reward of Literature, as we have explained, is influence, satisfaction, and honour: this the Author has all for his own. But, the accidental reward of money being that which depends mainly on the Publisher, the Publisher may fairly be allowed to share, and that in proportion to his time, his talents for business, and his risk.

If, however, unknown Authors seem at the mercy of the Publishers, no sooner has distinction been attained than the Publishers are no less at the mercy of the Authors. When Thomas Moore's fame was once established, he demanded 3000*l.* for his *Lallah Rookh;* and every penny of that sum he received. Nay, more. We know an instance in which actually a larger price has been paid to a popular Author than the nature of his work would warrant. Certain Publishers of little note will make a sacrifice in order that they may seem to be doing something; and experienced Authors are quite alive to their power of making these little men pay for the honour of seeing their names at the foot of a title-page.

Publishers are, in reality, the Author's best friends. Many a work of genius has their wonderful machinery rescued from oblivion, and dispersed in every quarter of the globe. Many a sanguine Author have they saved from increasing

his proverbial poverty, by convincing him that, however great his merit, there is no such demand for his work as can pay for the heavy costs of paper and of print. Henceforth, therefore, let no one consider that Publishers, as a class, can ever be said to aggravate, or, indeed, that they can ever fail to obviate and to lessen, the miseries of men of genius.

But if there ever was a hard case of an author living on the very crumbs of his publisher's table, which table he had loaded with the choicest viands, that is told in the life of the Rev. Thomas Scott, the author of the invaluable digest known by the name of *Scott's Commentary*.

There was a certain publisher who one day happened to think that a series of weekly annotations on the Bible from the pen of Thomas Scott, if supplied by him at the small sum of a guinea each, would yield a handsome profit to the firm. "Well, and where was the injustice?" The man might have said, "I showed as much confidence in the poor curate as he showed in himself. Four times every Sunday was he officiating in two churches, and walking fourteen miles between them, for a salary of 100*l.* a-year, and I paid him above 50*l.* for his spare hours." However the man of business might reconcile that part of the bargain to

his conscience, the following looked not quite so well: namely, that after fifteen numbers had been published with much success, he announced that the work must be abandoned unless the author could borrow from his friends and lend him the sum of 500*l.*!

Imagine the poor author writing, and calling, and explaining, and painfully inspiring his friends with his own simple, sanguine spirit—then paying over the hardly-gleaned cash to the bookseller, and soon after having to announce that the man had become bankrupt—that about 170*l.* was all he had received—and that he had lost all his labours, and was 230*l.* poorer than he began!

But what became of the work? A second bookseller purchased the stock, and reprinted a large part, but refused Scott any of the profit. And now the Court of Chancery has to interfere, rescuing the literary property, but only to tempt the inexperienced author to be his own publisher, to fill his house with unsaleable copies, and at last to sell the copyright. "At length," says Sir James Stephen, "we reach the catastrophe." It presents to us Thomas Scott, under the accumulated burdens of sixty-seven years, of sickness and of poverty, investigating his accounts, and ascertaining that nearly 200,000*l.* had been "paid in his lifetime across the

counter" for his theological publications—that he had himself derived from them an income of little more than 47*l.* a-year—that they had involved him in a debt of 1200*l.*—and that all his worldly wealth consisted of a warehouse full of unsaleable theology. Agitated and alarmed and distressed, but never desponding, he at length, for the first time, invokes the aid of his friends and fellow-labourers, among whom the large-souled Charles Simeon first answers the appeal with affectionate greetings, with numerous orders for books, and with a remittance of 560*l.* for his relief. Others rapidly follow this good example, and within two months the warehouse is emptied of its contents, and the great Commentator finds himself possessed of more than 2000*l.* With his debts paid, his cares dispersed, his heart warmed to his brethren, and his trust in God justified, the curtain falls on the brave old man applying himself to a new edition of his work, and toiling with all the vigour of youth to compile a new Concordance, to emulate and supersede the vast compilation of Cruden.

But, from the long list of the miseries of Authors we can select no one part on which we can enlarge with so forcible a warning as that which is connected with the death of Sheridan—a man who had written the first comedy and made the

most brilliant speech in the history of Parliament—still trifling and sporting with the talents entrusted to his charge, till he found at last that out of thousands of admirers he had scarcely a single friend. Truly did Juvenal say,—

"Mors sola fatetur,
Quantula sint hominum corpuscula."

For, so little was Richard Brinsley Sheridan individually and personally admired, and so distinct was he in general estimation from the talents with which he was endowed, that the great men of the day came not to pay homage to his genius till Sheridan himself was no more!

The death of Sheridan, and how those who deserted him when living could honour him and themselves at the same time, when he was dead, is an oft-told tale; but whoever would hear a truthful account of impressions conveyed while fresh and vivid in the mind may read the following, written the day of the funeral by a real mourner, Sir Samuel Romilly:—

"*July* 13*th*, 1816.

"On the invitation of the family of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, I this day attended his funeral. When I arrived at Peter Moore's house, in George Street, to which the body had been removed, as being near to Westminster Abbey, where it was to be buried, I was asto-

nished at the number and the description of persons who were assembled there: the Duke of York, Lord Sidmouth, Lord Mulgrave, Lord Anglesey, Lord Lynedoch, Wellesley Pole, and many others, whose politics have been generally opposed to Sheridan's, and who could grace the funeral with their presence only to pay a tribute to his extraordinary talents. How strange a contrast! For some weeks before his death Sheridan was nearly destitute of the means of subsistence. Executions for debt were in his house; and he passed his last days in the custody of sheriffs' officers, who abstained from conveying him to prison merely because they were assured that, to remove him, would cause his immediate death; and now, when dead, a crowd of persons, the first in rank, and station, and opulence, were eager to attend him to his grave. I believe that many, and I am sure that some, were self-invited. Such, certainly, were three of the Prince's friends—Lord Yarmouth, Bloomfield, and Leach. They sent a letter from Carlton House the day before the funeral, expressing a desire to attend, and their offer was not refused. The Prince, about ten days before Sheridan's death, when he was in great distress, and after some of the newspapers had observed upon the strange inattention he had met with, sent him a present of 200*l.*; but Mrs. Sheridan had the spirit to refuse it; and when she communicated to her husband what she had done, he approved her conduct."

The conclusion of all we have adduced—the fair balance that must be struck in the profits and losses of an intellectual life—may be truly represented thus:—that if men of genius have their

troubles, these troubles are the common lot of all mortal men. "Don't we see," says Mr. Thackeray, "daily, ruined inventors, grey-haired midshipmen, baulked heroes, blighted curates, barristers pining out a hungry life in chambers, the attorneys never mounting to their garrets, whilst the scores of them are rapping at the door of the successful quack below? If these suffer, who is the author that he should be exempt? I can conceive no kings or laws causing or curing Goldsmith's improvidence, or Fielding's fatal love of pleasure, or Dick Steele's mania for running races with the constable."

But the conclusion also is, that however much the Sorrows of the Man of Genius are—the sorrows of this life, and those which he must share with others—with regard to the Pleasures of the Man of Genius, they are peculiarly his own. In these he stands alone. For these choice prizes, all but the unintellectual are distanced in the race. "'Eclipse' and his progeny are first, and the rest nowhere." Men of Genius enjoy, often, such a glow of satisfaction, and sometimes, such ecstasy of delight, as they cry "Eureka! I have discovered it!" and, always, so inexhaustible a fund of amusement, as none of Homer's every-day acquaintance of mere "articulately-speaking men" ever dream of.

Does Innocence tend to a happy life? Does Innocence shield us from the stings of waspish neighbours? Does Charity oil the grating hinges on which our daily fortune turns? Do Good Humour and Serenity keep the grit of petulance and animosity from the delicate machinery of the world within us?—If so, where shall we find such a safeguard of all these amiable and easy-going inclinations as in literary pursuits? What treasure so conducive to innocence as an imagination closed against evil associations, because pre-occupied with the choice ideas of creative genius, or with the striking phenomena of Nature's laws? What source so fertile in hourly entertainment as a well-stored memory, ever conjuring up graphic scenes and thrilling passages from the finest authors, and thus transporting us from the trifling cares of the present to the councils of the mighty in distant generations?

Most beautifully, indeed, is this high privilege represented in the Eastern story, where the favoured child of the Genii carries an amulet in his bosom, by which all the gold and jewels of the Sultan's halls are no sooner seen than made his own. So the heavens to Newton, the earth to Buckland, and the sea to Humboldt, may truly be regarded as their own several domains, far more enjoyable than

any "lands called after their own names;" they may be considered as estates in which they owned a richer interest, and a far more enviable possession, than is granted to the wealthiest lord of ancestral parks or purchased lands.

Sir Samuel Romilly writes to his sister:—"Let me preach to you a philosophy which I have myself often found successful: it is, to command our imagination, and not to suffer it to carry us astray into the midst of tragedies *which are but possible;* for, though it is, I think, our duty in all cases to be prepared for the worst, it cannot be necessary that we should afflict ourselves by entering into all the detail of misery, and by dwelling on objects which we see but darkly, and through a medium that always magnifies and distorts. It becomes us to look forward to futurity, but not to pry into it with too curious an anxiety. Every evil will bring with it some cause or means of comfort. The greatest of our joys and afflictions are but in imagination. Learn then, with me, my dear sister, to treat these waking visions, which you so forcibly describe to have thrown you into alternate ecstasies of joy and starts of fear, and to have made you pass many uneasy days and sleepless nights, as the vain representation of what never was and never will be."

Thucydides says, the delight of being honoured

is one of the few pleasures a man is never too old to enjoy.

All men, in all ages, have felt distinction to be a reward, both grateful when attained and well worth striving for. Even Demosthenes was delighted when a basketwoman said as he passed—"This is that Demosthenes!" It is all very specious and philosophical in the poet Cowley to argue as he did, but the world is not philosophical. There is more Romance than Reason in our humour; and man, being made to be tickled with a straw, is not the less happy because he is too little metaphysical to know why and wherefore.

The remark of Cowley to which we referred was this:—"Now, as for being known much at sight, and pointed at, I cannot comprehend the honour that lies in that. Whatsoever it be, every mountebank has it more than the best orator, and the hangman more than the lord chief justice of a city."

But, for all this reasoning—so long as there is pleasure in superiority and success, there will also be pleasure in the evidence of it. Who will believe that Lord Nelson was not pleased when he heard that the landlord of his inn had bored a hole and shown him as a peep-show?—Thomas Moore thought it worth recording, that when in the habit of reading

in the British Museum a poor Irish labourer, who was at work on the premises, offered a pot of ale to any one who would point out his country's poet the next time he came. "Accordingly," says Moore, "being brought where he could have a sight of me while reading, the poor fellow was so pleased that he stood two pots of ale with the showman instead of one." Aye, and Moore also seems happy in the recollection that, in coming out of the Freemasons' Tavern, after dining for the benefit of the Literary Fund, one Tim Flaherty called out, "Shall I get you a cab, Mr. Moore? Sure, ain't I the man that *patronises* your *Melodies?*"—Sir Walter Scott was not insensible to the approving voice of his countrymen, whether high or low: he related that, as to substantial honour, few could boast of a more striking instance than he could: for, a fishmonger once—after saying he had no turbot for love or money—walked all the way from the West End to the City for the pleasure of doing business with him.

But while we maintain that men of genius have their meed of pleasure, we would not conclude that they are always as merry and cheerful as their works would imply.

We should naturally suppose that a man must be in a merry mood himself to excite merriment

in other men. Yet the history of those envied spirits who had "kept the table in a roar," shows how erroneous is this opinion. It is as much a matter of business with a comic actor to look merry as for an undertaker to look sad. We hear from the widow of the late Charles Mathews, that while the theatre resounded with laughter at one of his monologues, he was suffering pain of body from the state of his cracked and sore tongue, and pain of mind at the crowded house, which reminded him of his bad bargain, by which his talents were profiting rather the manager than himself.

— Of Liston it is reported, that such was the depression of his spirits at the very time that he was causing far more merriment than any other man in London, that he consulted Abernethy; who, not recognising his patient, told him to go and see Liston act *Paul Pry!* But what if actors sympathised with tragic scenes, living in Horace's inexorable condition, "to weep that we must weep!" Well, Mrs. Siddons was thus tender-hearted. She did really forget herself in her character; and Miss Kelly said, that when playing with Mrs. Siddons, tears from that mighty woman's eyes had often fallen upon her neck: though with Garrick there was nothing of the kind. On one occasion, while boxes, pit, and gallery were in a melting

mood, he whispered from beneath his intensely-clasped hands, "Why, Jack, this will do!"

And, if from Actors we turn to Authors, the life of poor Hood bears sad evidence of how far it is possible for the weary, wounded spirit, as it were

> "To carry smiles and sunshine in the face,
> While discontent sits heavy at the heart."

His *Up the Rhine*, and sundry *Comic Annuals*, were written while self-banished from England, under a burthen of debts and difficulties from the failure of his publisher. Towards the end of his life—little did the public who laughed over his oddities imagine it—he may be said to have waged a ten-years' war—from 1835 to 1845—with sickness and sorrow, from want of money.

And as to money, easy as it is to talk so philosophically of limiting our desires within the bounds of nature, still it is folly to deny that, when a man is wound up and tuned in taste and feelings to one set of habits, and to one scale of refinement, it will ever fail to be jarring on the heart-strings to feel that those he holds most dear may know a harder lot—left penniless to try the tender mercies of that striving and struggling world, in which each has enough to do to keep

afloat his own kith and kin, without frittering away his hardly-tasked energies on strangers.

All must feel for the later days of Thomas Hood, especially when they read in that charming biography, from the joint pens of his son and daughter, that — after Hood was told that his heart was affected, and that all literary occupation would aggravate certain symptoms, of which spitting of blood was one — such were his necessities, that he still wrote on; some of his most humorous pieces being the work of a fast-declining invalid, propped up with pillows in his bed!

Cowper wrote *John Gilpin* in one of his fits of morbid dejection. "Some of the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote," said he, "have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps, had never been written at all."

Kirke White observes, that Sir Richard Steele, who wrote like a saint, and who, in his *Christian Hero*, shows the strongest marks of a religious and a devout heart, lived, notwithstanding all this, a drunkard and a debauchee.

But we must not let any one suppose that Thomas Hood — any more than Sydney Smith — was a jester and nothing else. Both were men who were truly alive to the responsibilities of life,

and not the less capable of doing good because born to do good in a happy way. Sir Robert Peel congratulated Hood on being one of the few who had lived merry and wise—one who was never betrayed by facility of expression into saying anything inconsistent with purity and perfect innocence. Indeed, we sensibly feel that we are making the pleasing acquaintance of a kind-hearted and religious father, and a fair sample of a Christian family, while reading the *Life of Thomas Hood.*

Many authors have appeared in private life very different from what we would infer from their writings: so, the lively will seem dull, the wise childish, and even the eloquent will—as we once observed with a certain Bishop, admitted to be the ablest debater on the Bench—when not braced up by the stimulus of occasion, seem confused and hesitate as at a loss for a word. This occasional inferiority in great men may be explained by a natural tendency to unbend their minds: it may result from the reaction after severe brain-labour.

On this subject Sir W. Scott says,—"No one that has not laboured as I have done on imaginary topics, can judge of the comfort afforded by walking on all-fours, and being grave and dull. I dare say, when the clown of the pantomime escapes

from his nightly tasks of vivacity, it is his especial pleasure to smoke a pipe and be prosy with some good-natured fellow, the dullest of his acquaintance. I have seen such a tendency in Sir Adam Fergusson, the gayest man I ever knew; and poor Tom Sheridan has complained to me of the fatigue of supporting the character of an agreeable companion."

Sydney Smith also complained that it was a severe tax on a man's energies to feel that he was always expected to be entertaining.

But Thomas Hood pleasantly enumerates all the blessings enjoyed by the man of letters. He says:—"A natural turn for reading and intellectual pursuits, probably preserved me from the moral shipwreck, so apt to befal those who are deprived in early life of this paternal pilotage. My books kept me from the ring, the dog-pit, the tavern, the saloon. The closet associate of Pope and Addison, the mind accustomed to the noble though silent discourse of Shakespeare and Milton, will hardly seek or put up with low company and slaves. How powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking! How generous mental food can atone for a meagre diet: rich fare on the paper for short commons on the cloth!"

Hood continues, what though his stomach rebelled at dainty dishes, he could still enjoy his *Peregrine Pickle* and "the *Feast* after the manner of the ancients."—What though sentenced by his physician to a scale of diet unknown even to the Poor-Law Commissioners, and denied all fluids stronger than that which drowns kittens and washes pinafores, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" were his still. "Denied beef, I enjoyed *Bul*wer and *Cow*per; forbidden mutton, there was *Lamb;* and in lieu of pork, the great *Bacon* or *Hogg.*"—"Depressed bodily by the fluid that damps everything, I get intellectually elevated with Milton, a little merry with Swift, or rather jolly with Rabelais, whose Pantagruel, by the way, is equal to the best gruel with rum in it."

Hood then enumerates other ills, great and small, in this world, which try the head, the heart, the temper; of these he had his share: still his *burthen* was always lightened by a *load of books.*

We have all heard that Kilkenny cats devoured each other; but it is not so generally known that they left behind an orphan kitten, which, true to its breed, began to eat itself up, till happily diverted by a mouse. Now, Hood likens the human mind to that kitten; for the mind being apt to prey upon itself, unless diverted by a new object:

nor is any diversion better for the purpose than a book. "While reading the history of Defoe's *Great Plague*, who would not be reconciled to a few *little* ones?" And then in this letter—printed and sold by the Bazaar Committee for the benefit of the Manchester Athenæum—he says, very beautifully:—

"Many, many a dreary hour have I got over—many a gloomy misgiving postponed—many a mental and bodily annoyance forgotten, by the help of the Tragedies and Comedies of our Dramatists and Novelists! Many a trouble has been soothed by the still small voice of the Moral Philosopher; many a dragon-like care charmed to sleep by the sweet song of the Poets—'thanks and honour to the glorious masters of the pen and the great inventors of the press,!'

CHAPTER XX.

WHETHER POVERTY MAKES OR MARS — NOBLE AUTHORS — A GREAT MAN PLUCKED! — DOWN IN THE WORLD — WARREN HASTINGS ALL BUT LOST — BURKE'S KINDNESS TO CRABBE — CHARLES LAMB — EARLY FAILURES OF ORATORS AND AUTHORS — AUTHORS AT WHAT AGE BEST — GENIUS ALLIED TO MADNESS — TOM MOORE'S DUEL — AMUSEMENTS AND HOBBIES OF GENIUS.

WHILE we read of great men being poor, and at some critical moment of their lives almost lost to the world by their poverty and want of opportunity to make their greatness known, we are apt to forget that poverty on the balance forms a more promising school than riches. One day, in the Court of Chancery, an application was made for an order to allow a young man an income of two hundred pounds a-year out of an estate in dispute. Whereupon Lord Eldon, seeing the applicant in court, said, "Young gentleman, I hope you will reflect that this is a very critical order I am making in

your favour. This sum may furnish opportunity to talent, or it may paralyse all exertion. If I had had a certain two hundred a-year at your age, I should not now be sitting where I am."

Poor men have the benefit of a very bracing atmosphere for their energies; and one reason that Cambridge has produced a larger proportion of eminent Counsel and Judges than Oxford is, that education is cheaper at Cambridge, and there is more to attract needy men. A Senior Wrangler once remarked to us, that all the time he was reading he was, as Horace says, *pauperiem fugiens* — running as if with the bailiff at his heels; and, according to his place among the Wranglers, he felt he should be either made or ruined. It is true that the sons of luxury and ease have, in some instances, appeared among the greatest of inventors and discoverers. Witness Bacon, Worcester, Boyle, Cavendish, Talbot, and Rosse, the constructor of the best of telescopes; but still, the class of butchers, weavers, tailors, and mechanics, have done more for the arts and sciences than the British Peerage.

Still, Poverty does seem to try Genius hard. Fancy Cowper for three years sitting next the future Lord Chancellor Thurlow in a solicitor's office—Chapman's in Southampton Row—"con-

stantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle." He says, "I slept in the house—I spent my days there,"—but present in body, absent in spirit—"I rambled from the thorny road of jurisprudence to the primrose paths of literature."

Then change the scene, and imagine Oliver Goldsmith, rich as Crœsus, and happy with the 500*l.* netted for his *Good-natured Man*, entertaining Johnson and Reynolds at dinner, in a new suit "lined with silk and furnished with gold buttons," or playing romping games of blindman's buff—"once a boy always a boy"—with less sedate companions in chambers in the Temple, while Blackstone was writing his *Commentaries* underneath and complaining of the racket of his noisy neighbour!—Reader, you may visit the identical apartments. Their rooms are on the second floor of No. 2 Brick Court, Middle Temple, on the right-hand side, overlooking the walks of the Temple Gardens.—Two such men! so near, yet each ignorant of the immortality fame destined for the other.

If any gentleman will take the trouble to search the records of the College of Surgeons, and will run his finger down the dusty leaves as far as the 21st of December, 1758—though Washing-

ton Irving's finger has passed over that interesting entry before him—he will find that Oliver Goldsmith was among the number who presented themselves for examination, and among the number of those who did not pass!

Thomas Percy, collector of the *Reliques*, describes Goldsmith's misery and poverty in 1759:—

"I called on Goldsmith in the beginning of March, and found him in lodgings so poor and miserable, that I should not think it proper to mention the circumstance, if I did not consider it the highest proof of his genius and talents that, under every disadvantage, he could gradually emerge from such obscurity to the enjoyment of all the comforts, and even luxuries, and admission into the best society in London. He was writing his *Enquiry* in a miserable, dirty-looking room in Green Arbour Court, in which there was but one chair; and when from civility he resigned it to me, he was himself obliged to sit in the window. While we were conversing together, some one gently tapped at the door, and being desired to come in, a poor, ragged little girl, of a very becoming demeanour, entered the room, and dropping a curtsey, said,—'My mamma sends her compliments, and begs the favour of you to lend her a chamberpot full of coals.'"

What a picture does this present of genius and refinement associated and "walking together as friends," each bearing the other's burthen in the lowest depths of repulsive misery!

At a later period the same simple-hearted Goldsmith is himself again, and astonishes Sir Joshua Reynolds and a literary party by beginning a personal anecdote with,—"When I lived among the beggars in St. Mary Axe——"

Still, nothing could mar the innate refinement of Goldsmith's mind. His writings bear the undoubted patent of nature's true nobility. No writer ever left such unqualified evidence of a pure taste. Poverty made him know "strange bedfellows;" still, from the lowest depths of degradation he could emerge unsullied; and the moment he had put on one of those "blue silk or satin suits," or "the lined ratteen," of which the entry is still preserved in Mr. William Filby's books, Goldsmith was company for a duke. His pure nature had no affinity for the vulgar; so it was proof against those subtle influences that insensibly affect the system of ordinary men.

High birth and fortune undoubtedly ensure a fair hearing, and afford an opportunity for cultivating talents, as well as making talents known.

Edmund Burke lingered in obscurity ten of

the most precious years of his life as secretary to "Single-speech" Hamilton, in Ireland, and, after breaking away from him and resolving to risk beginning life again, he was almost banishing himself to America, when the friendship of Fitzherbert, a member of Dr. Johnson's famous club, made him Secretary to the Premier, the Marquis of Rockingham.

When Edmund Burke first came to seek his fortune in London, he soon realised the truth that the connexion between gold and genius is uncertain indeed. He wrote, in allusion to his visits to the House of Commons, where he was never tired of listening to those debates in which, perhaps, he little thought he should ever take so distinguished a part,—"The House of Commons not unfrequently exhibits explosions of eloquence that rise superior to those of Greece and Rome, even in their proudest days. Yet, after all, a man will make more by the figures of arithmetic than by figures of rhetoric, unless he can get into the trade wind, and then he will sail secure over the Pactolean sands."

Neither did this great man ever fail to retain a lively sympathy for struggling merit. One anecdote of his kind assistance is connected with Crabbe, the late powerful, though harsh, describer

of common and country life. The poet travelled to London from his curacy, with a volume of verse, to make his fortune at once. But he had, unluckily, brought with him but three pounds. In default of a publisher, he ventured to print the volume at his own expense; so the bard's three pounds did not go far, and the press soon came to a stand-still. The next expedient was to dedicate the poems to a noble lord. But the noble lord, who probably had offers of the honours of a dedication on his table every day, made no reply, and the poet's hopes sank again.

So now, poor Crabbe was driven to extremity; and at last, utterly unable to extricate himself, he thought of applying to Burke. Of Burke, however, he had no personal knowledge, no introduction, no intermediate friend. Still he wrote a detail of his circumstances, which, coming from the graphic pen of so touching a describer of the sufferings of others, may be presumed to have been forcible where the sufferings were his own; and, saying that he was prompted to this step, in the instance of so eminent a person, simply by "knowing that he was a great man, and believing that he was a good one," he waited the result with natural and extreme anxiety.

Burke, both a great and a good man, did not

fail the poet. He answered his application immediately; promoted a subscription for his work; and introduced him to a circle of his friends, who laid the foundation of his fortunes. His fame was the work of his own hands.

But all such trials are not hindrances. Though Sir Walter Scott, for many years, followed the routine of a lawyer's office, still he was not of opinion that there was anything lost to his powers as a poet or an original writer by what some would have called a life of drudgery, calamities to a man of genius. On the contrary, Sir Walter held that the higher faculties were rather braced and invigorated, than diverted and exhausted, by spending part of every day in some matter-of-fact occupation.

Charles Lamb, when a clerk at the India House, could still throw off those charming essays called *Elia;* and amongst his *Confessions of a Superannuated Man* he tells us that, when at last discharged with a pension, he had such a superabundance of leisure, that he positively wanted "a steward to take charge of his estate in time." That without labour there is no leisure, has become a proverb. Certain it is that busy men have often looked forward to the end of their vacation for the time to execute some favourite work: as if the intervals and the half-hours so hardly saved

from customers or clients were most genial for work. It really seems as if difficulty and diversion kept the mind under high-pressure, till a spare and quiet half-hour gave a peculiar zest and elastic impulse to all its highest and creative powers. How, otherwise, can we account for such a work as the *Lives of the Chancellors*, eked out of the scanty leisure of a man as hard-worked as Lord Campbell?

It is strange, though true, that in the fortunes of Warren Hastings there should also have been one critical moment threatening a life of obscurity, instead of a world-wide renown, very similar to the crisis in fortunes of his formidable Impeacher, Edmund Burke. For Warren Hastings returned from India, after a residence of fifteen years, with a fortune so limited, that he is said to have been reduced to give lessons in the Oriental languages. This report may have originated in an application he certainly made for the establishment of a Persian Professorship in Oxford. It was during this visit to England that Hastings became known to Dr. Johnson and his distinguished friends. But after four years he was sent out to India as Second in Council at Madras; and then, after three years only, behold Warren Hastings Governor-General of India!

The idea conveyed by that magic word Genius, is one that leads many persons to overlook the fact that some of our great speakers and great writers have not succeeded at their first attempt. Of this the late Lord Goderich was an instance, who, when first he rose to speak in Parliament, lost all presence of mind, and after three attempts with some prefatory words, was obliged to sit down. That Sheridan was advised by the famous reporter Woodfall, that he would never distinguish himself in that line (as a speaker), has been already told. Also, Mr. Disraeli's early speeches were so far out of keeping with the taste, tone, and temper of the House, that his present parliamentary eminence would have seemed impossible.

Great writers, like great speakers, have not always been successful at first.

Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's *Falkland* as a novel, and his *Weeds and Wild Flowers* as a poetical venture, were also failures. So, also, the Author of *Coningsby*, the *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, might well have been daunted by the ridicule heaped on his *Wondrous Tale of Alroy*. Byron might well have been discouraged with the reception of his first work. That a critique in the *Edinburgh Review*, and one generally attributed to Mr. Francis Jeffrey, the then Editor of that clever periodical, should

have noticed Lord Byron's first publication in the manner following, must certainly be counted among the Curiosities of English Literature:—

"The poesy of this young Lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations, in either direction, from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level than if they were so much stagnant water . . . . Our desire is to counsel him, that he do forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents, which are considerable, and his opportunities, which are great, to better account."

We will conclude this chapter by a few remarks illustrative of the peculiarities of great men, physical, moral, and intellectual.

And first, we will speak of the age at which works of genius have been composed.

As to youthful poets.—"No English poet," says Campbell, "ever equalled Chatterton at the same age, sixteen."

Mary Godwin was under nineteen when she wrote *Frankenstein*.

Nearly all of our first-rate comedies, it was observed by Thomas Moore, were the productions of very young men. Those of Congreve

were all written before he was five-and-twenty. Farquhar produced the *Constant Couple* in his two-and-twentieth year, and died at thirty. Vanbrugh was a young ensign when he sketched out the *Relapse* and the *Provoked Wife;* and Sheridan crowned his reputation with the *School for Scandal* at six-and-twenty.

Milton was best in middle life.

Dryden wrote *Alexander's Feast* when sixty-seven.

Goethe even said, that for poetry the elder was the better man.

Burke was more poetically imaginative in his later than in his earlier efforts.

Pope was *good* young, as well as Byron; as also Keats, who died when only in his twenty-fifth year.

Walter Savage Landor says,—"Be not ambitious of an early fame, for such is apt to shrivel and drop under the tree."

Cowper was fifty-one when he published his first volume, comprising the *Table Talk,* and other poems.

Theophrastus began his *Characters* at ninety; Cato studied Greek at eighty; and Plutarch, Latin nearly as late. Sir Henry Spelman became an

antiquary at fifty. Ogilby, the translator of Hômer and Virgil, knew little of either Latin or Greek till past fifty.

It is difficult to associate obesity with anything intellectual, however much it may be a sign of an easy temper. As Shakespeare says,—

"Let me have men about me that are fat."

But such were Steele, Addison, Sydney Smith, C. J. Fox, Thomson, and Swift. The great scholar Elmsley, also, was the fattest undergraduate in the University.

As to the habits of Men of Genius.—It is natural that poets should be recluse, and prefer to "hold converse with nature's charms," and with books rather than with men. The cultivation of the imaginative faculty, says Moore, weans the Man of Genius from actual life, and substitutes the sensibilities of the imagination for those of the heart. The poet Dante, a wanderer from his wife and children, passed the whole of a detached and restless life in nursing his immortal dream of Beatrice; while Petrarch, who would not suffer his only daughter to reside beneath his roof, expended thirty-two years of poetry and passion on idealised love. Alfieri's Sonnet to his Mother is

full of tenderness, yet he passed for years within a few miles of her residence without going to see her. The poet Young, with all his parade of domestic sorrows, was a neglectful husband and harsh father. Richard Steele lived in practical denial of all the morality he taught; and Sterne, it has been said, preferred "whining over a dead ass to relieving a living mother."

Moore elsewhere compares the Man of Genius to the silkworm, wrapt up in their own tasks, either strangers or rebels to domestic ties; with a deposit for posterity in their souls, which they watch and enrich to the sacrifice of all other thoughts and considerations.

Pope says, "To follow poetry as one ought, you must forget father and mother and cleave to the Muse alone." Moore and Byron struggled against this instinct of drawing back into the "lonely laboratory of self;" hence their poetry had more of "the stamp of real life."

But, to this rule the kind-hearted Charles Lamb was indeed *spendidè mendax*. After that dreadful domestic tragedy, his sister, in a fit of frenzy having stabbed and killed her mother, remained in confinement though she had quite recovered her reason. Naturally, no one could feel sure that a recurrence of her frenzy might not

endanger those about her. The members of her family generally opposed her discharge, especially her brother John, who was best able to afford to support her; and painful doubts were suggested by the authorities of the parish as to their duty in the matter.

But Charles Lamb came nobly to her deliverance, and satisfied all parties by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life. Talfourd believes, though he cannot prove, that the Home-Secretary was consulted (as in these days he must have been), and acquiesced; but, at all events, the result was that Miss Lamb left the Asylum, and took up her abode for life with her brother Charles. For her sake he abandoned all thoughts of love and marriage; and with an income of scarcely more than 100*l.* a-year from his clerkship, aided by a little from their old aunt's small annuity, he set out on the journey of life at twenty-two years of age, cheerfully, with his beloved companion, endeared to him the more by her sad calamity and the constant apprehension of a recurrence of the malady which had caused it!

In one respect Men of Genius have a weakness that may well teach a lesson of contentment to their less highly-gifted friends.

Seneca said, "*Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixturâ insaniæ,*—In every great genius there is a mixture of insanity." This is quoted by Father Prout, who says that Newton was mad when he commented on the Revelations; and Napier, inventor of Logarithms, was ultimately mad also. Tasso had been in a madhouse; Lee, the dramatist, was in Bedlam, and there wrote a tragedy of twenty-five acts; Sophocles was, at all events, accused of insanity, though his *Œdipus Coloneus* was produced as a triumphant proof of a sound mind. Burns suffered from delirium; Charles Lamb was in Hoxton madhouse before his twentieth year; Pascal was a hypochondriac; Cowper and Rousseau were subject to lunacy; Collins, Tasso, Cervantes, and Camoens, died mad; Shelley could not have been pronounced sane; Swift died mad; and Dr. Millingen attributes to Byron a certain melancholy foreboding, strongly confirmatory of an opinion published by Miss Milbanke, that "Byron was really insane," as several of his family had been before him: Byron once remarked, "I picture myself terminating my days, like Swift, a grinning idiot;" and Byron actually enumerated three of his maternal ancestors who died by their own hand. Basil Hall died in Haslar Hospital; Southey's son was incurably insane, and Southey

himself outlived his faculties; Pope was hypochondriacal; the Duke of Marlborough found an asylum his last refuge. Swift built an asylum in anticipation of his approaching fate, knowing, like Lear,—

"This way to madness leads."

At all events, mad or not, men of great genius have been, in many respects, very different from common mortals. Of this remark, the story of Moore's duel, as related by himself, is, indeed, a very extraordinary, and almost incredible exemplification. On any other evidence the following story would not be worth a thought:—

Lord Jeffrey had, in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, in 1806, accused Thomas Moore (as he read it) of a deliberate intention to corrupt the minds of his readers. Whereupon Moore addressed Jeffrey with the following among other words:—"To this I beg to answer, you are a liar; yes, sir, a liar; and I adopt this harsh and vulgar mode of defiance, in order to compel you to that alternative which you might otherwise have hesitated in affording me." *Mem.*—Moore had never fired a pistol but once, as a boy, and then he nearly blew the top of his thumb off!

* * * * *

Scene — Chalk Farm; seconds loading pistols, and knowing very little of the matter. The deadly enemies, left a minute alone, are actually exchanging civilities, as follows: —

Jeffrey. "What a beautiful morning it is!"

Moore. (With a slight smile.) "Yes! a morning made for better purposes."

To which Jeffrey's only response was a sort of assenting sigh.

"As our assistants were rather slow in their preparations," said Moore, and we walked up and down together, I related to him, as *à propos* to the purpose, what Billy Egan, the Irish barrister, once said on a similar occasion: — 'Sure, isn't it bad enough to take the dose, without being by at the mixing up?'"

* * * * *

Certainly, experience shows that it is not safe to draw exclusively on the imaginative powers. How truly refreshing is the following account of two great men, whose genius led them into the more healthful scenes of common life: —

Dr. Jenner and Sir H. Davy, distinguished alike in Natural Philosophy and in the eternal obligations which they conferred on the human race, were also alike in the simplicity of their characters, and in combining Poetry with Philo-

sophy. Though the late Emperor of Russia's mother had given Jenner a diamond ring of the value of about 150*l.*, he would never wear it except on the birthday of one of his children. When some of his company asked one evening to see the Imperial ring, "Come, come," said Jenner, "let us take a stroll in the garden, and hear the drowsy hum of the beetle;" he did so, and then he began to play one of his favourite airs on the flute.

Again. "How delightful," says Sir H. Davy, "in early spring, after the dull and tedious time of winter, when the frosts disappear and the sunshine warms the earth and waters, to wander forth by some clear stream, to see the leaf bursting from the purple bed, to scent the odours of the bank perfumed by the violet, and enamelled, as it were, by the primrose and the daisy; to wander upon the fresh turf below the shade of trees, whose bright blossoms are filled with the music of the bee; and on the surface of the waters to view the gaudy flies sparkling like animated gems in the sunbeams, while the bright and beautiful trout is watching them from below; to hear the twittering of the water-birds, who, alarmed at your approach, rapidly hide themselves beneath the flowers and leaves of the water-lily; and, as the season advances, to find all these objects changed for others of the same

kind, but brighter and better, till the swallow and the trout contend for the May-fly; and till, in pursuing your amusement in the calm and balmy evening, you are serenaded by the songs of the cheerful thrush and melodious nightingale, performing the offices of paternal love in the thickets ornamented with the rose and woodbine."

Indeed, the great inventor of the safety-lamp and author of *Salmonia*—this friend of miners and the foe of fishes — was so charmed with the very thoughts of angling, that you never could be sure that any topic of conversation would not land you by the streamlet side. "You might talk of chemicals on the top of a mountain, but if there was a salmon to be caught at its base, Davy would soon bring you down below, and make you see the death of a salmon in the dashing waters."

Lord Thurlow when stranded, his course run, left without the Great Seal, and without a place in any party or in any opposition, found some resource in classical literature. However, the best of recreations makes a poor business, and he suffered much from the *tedium vitæ*, for want of some definite object to which his mental energies might tend. So, Thurlow became a great novel-reader. Lord Lyndhurst (said a relative) would throw himself on a sofa in a state of prostration after his labours, and

call for any novel on which to repose his restless thoughts. Thurlow was once so interested in the plot of a novel that he sent off his groom from Dulwich to London, at ten o'clock at night, for a concluding volume, that he might know the fate of the heroine before he went to sleep.

Novel reading, however, we can associate with greatness, but think of Boxing!

Wyndham once received an express from Lord Grey, which made a great sensation in every town it passed through, but which turned out (upon opening the gilt despatch-box) to be the report of a battle between Gully and Gregson, sent by the Foreign Secretary to the War Secretary, directed as "upon public service."

A Surrey magistrate told Wilberforce (in 1800), that in attempting to prevent a boxing-match, the rabble threw their hats into the air, declaring Mr. Wyndham had defended boxing in Parliament, and cried "Wyndham and Liberty." A relative of the author's had seen Wyndham at a boxing-match.

Dr. Johnson is reputed to have been a skilful boxer, and John Milton was proud of excelling in the broadsword exercise, though he was not, like the Doctor, of Herculean proportions, but rather under the middle size; and so eminently

beautiful in youth as to have been called at Christ's College, Cambridge, the Lady of his college.

Lord Byron's name, says Moore, I find among the "backers" in a history of the Ring, or *Boxiana*. He writes to the professional pugilist of his day as "Dear Jackson."—This man was so popular that a string of carriages, said Moore, might have been seen waiting at his door, and he made 2000*l*. a-year by boxing lessons!

Eldon indulged but in one recreation, shooting. He was a bad shot, and was accused of killing his birds sitting, and even of buying them: whence the joke whether he became possessed of his birds by *descent* or *purchase*. Eldon was fond of a pun; and explained the inferiority of his later to his more youthful sportsmanship by saying, from the time he could afford a qualification he found himself disqualified. He once hunted, but gave it up after a bad fall, saying he was afraid of being *presided over* by the coroner, instead of presiding over the House of Lords.

As to the excitement of field sports and their salutary effects, that nature will hardly dispense with them, we learn not only from medical authorities of the present day, but also from the following curious notice of the penalty paid by

those who would cry them down. Excitement is essential to life.

"Did you ever hear," writes Jeffrey to Lord Murray, "that most of the Quakers die of stupidity, actually and literally? I was assured of the fact by a very intelligent physician, who practised twenty years among them, and informs me that few of the richer sort live to be fifty, but die of a sort of atrophy, their cold blood just stagnating by degrees among their flabby fat. They eat too much, take little exercise, and, above all, have no nervous excitement. The affection is known about Liverpool by the name of "the Quakers' disease."

Lord Erskine was distinguished by a remarkable sympathy for animals! He was among the first who proposed a bill for the Prevention of Cruelty. He had always several favourite animals, to whom he was much attached—a favourite dog, which he used, said Romilly, to bring to all his consultations; another favourite dog, which, at the time he was Lord Chancellor, he himself rescued from some cruel boys in the street; a favourite goose, which followed him about his grounds; a favourite mackaw, and other dumb favourites without number. Erskine now tells us that he has two

favourite leeches. He had been blooded by them last autumn, when dangerously ill, at Portsmouth; they had saved his life, and he had brought them with him to town, kept them in a glass, and he had himself given them fresh water every day, and had formed a friendship with them. He said he was sure they both knew him, and were grateful to him. He had given them different names, "Home" and "Cline" (the names of two celebrated surgeons), their dispositions being quite different! After a good deal of conversation about them, Erskine went himself and brought the leeches out of his library, and placed them in their glass upon the table—the vivacity, the tones, details, and the gestures of Lord Erskine could alone give an adequate idea of this singular scene. Sterne would greet this as a new exemplification of the Hobby-horsical.

George Selwyn, the celebrated wit of the last century, had a morbid taste for executions, and every possible chamber of horror. The taste he had cultivated at Tyburn, led him to Paris to see Damien broken upon the wheel. Damien was the assassin who attempted the life of Louis XV. Sir H. Wraxall's story is, that Selwyn's enthusiasm attracted the notice of the executioner, who cried

out to the crowd,—" *Faites place pour monsieur; c'est un Anglais, et un amateur.*"

Mr. Jesse tells us, that to George Selwyn all the details of crime, the private history of the criminal, his demeanour at his trial, in the dungeon, and on the scaffold, were matters of the deepest and most extraordinary interest. A coffin, corpse, or suicide, were equal objects of attention.

When the first Lord Holland was on his deathbed, he was told that Selwyn, who had long lived on terms of the closest intimacy with him, had called to inquire after his health. " The next time Mr. Selwyn calls," said his Lordship, " show him up: if I am alive, I shall be delighted to see him; and if I am dead, he will be glad to see me."

In this anecdote the taste of Lord Holland appears almost as questionable as that of George Selwyn. But both must be judged with reference to the age in which they lived—when fashionable clubs were the resort of rakes and gamesters; and when this same Lord Holland could give his son, Charles James Fox, at the early age of fifteen, guineas to amuse himself with at the gaming-table. A dangerous passion for gaming haunted Fox many a year. Pitt and Wilberforce began in the same

dangerous school, but happily broke off the habit of gaming early. Wilberforce, on one occasion, "held the bank;" and as he proved a winner, he was so much concerned at the losses of one of the party, that he abjured gaming ever after. Faro tables, at one time, had become part of the furniture of certain fashionable houses.

The great Warren Hastings was a man truly great; for, from the condition of a poor orphan, meanly clad and scantily fed, the playfellow of young ploughboys, he established and extended our then tottering Indian empire, and triumphed, after a ten-years' siege, carried on against his reputation and his liberties by the most formidable combination of energy and talent that ever united against one single victim; and still, when his great work was done, he had a remainder of some twenty-four years in which to restore and enjoy his ancestral seat at Daylesford.

One would be curious to know what were his resources. Those inward energies and mainsprings of prodigious enterprise, which had been long used to a world-wide sphere of action, did they fret and consume the body which encased them? or what were the channels in which they learned to flow?—Hastings fell back on those literary resources which, under that prince of Latin poet-

asters, Vincent Bourne, he had early cultivated at Westminster, surrounded by Churchill, Colman, Cumberland, Cowper, and Elijah Impey.

Mr. Gleig says, that "a copy of verses was as natural an operation as his morning's meal; besides this, fancy farming and gardening were his delight. He rode Arab horses, fattened cattle and tried to raise custard apples and the choice exotics in his greenhouses; and tried, and tried in vain, to bring the Cashmere goats from the table-land of Thibet to the colder latitudes of Worcestershire."

How shall we account for this fondness for the classics? Is it not rather late in the day to give so decided a preference to the literature of Athens and of Rome, now that all the finest ideas have been so often presented in a modern form?—That there is a great deal of what we must be so unclassical as to term *humbug* (no other term will serve), as regards the enthusiasm of many, there is no doubt; but not so with the scholar, to whom the terms, the language, the characters, and the whole mind of antiquity, has become natural and familiar. The scholar will tell you that you may find the same ideas, but not the same associations, and nothing that touches the same chord.—Can the same idea come with the same force or the

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